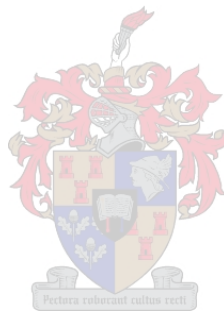


Writing the Border: avoiding restorative nostalgia by using social media discourses to create a Borderdrama

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Declaration

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Abstract

A number of plays have been staged about the South African Border War. Some of these plays have been uncritical in their representation of the war and have promoted a kind of restorative nostalgia that glosses over the SADF's share in a shameful past. In staging the Border War, the playwright has to portray perpetrator trauma in a way that engages the audience to critically examine the past. This study uses the arts-based research framework to create a play that reflects the research done on Border War veterans. The study firstly identifies thematic material in South African plays about the Border War in an overview of the lineage of practice. It then examines social media discourses on the Border war to generate thematic material for the creation of a new play. The drama that was created from this research, is called *Bloed en Bodem*. Reviews from the performance of this drama at two national arts festivals are primarily used to assess the play as an example of research-led practice. The study's primary conclusion is that complexity and binary voices can be an antidote to restorative nostalgia. By including voices that both contradict and expose the veteran's views of the past, the master narrative of conscription is destabilized and opportunities for responsible meaning-making emerge.

Opsomming

'n Aantal dramas oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Grensoorlog is al op die planke gebring. Sekere van hierdie dramas is onkrities in hul uitbeelding van die oorlog en ontaard in 'n sort restouratiewe nostalgie wat lig maak van die rol wat die SAW gespeel het in die ongeregtighede van die verlede. Wanneer 'n drama oor die Grensoorlog op die planke gebring word moet die dramaturg dadertrauma uitbeeld op 'n manier wat die gehoor betrek by 'n kritiese ondersoek van die verlede. Dié studie maak gebruik van die Kunsgebaseerde navorsingsraamwerk om 'n drama te skep wat die navorsing oor grensoorlogveterane reflekteer. Die studie identifiseer eerstens tematiese materiaal in Suid-Afrikaanse dramas wat geskryf is oor die Grensoorlog in 'n praktykoorsig. Sosiale media diskoerse oor die Grensoorlog word dan ondersoek om tematiese materiaal te genereer vir 'n nuwe drama. Die drama wat uit hierdie navorsing ontaard het is *Bloed en Bodem*. Resensies van die opvoering van *Bloed en Bodem* by twee nasionale kunstefeeste word hoofsaaklik gebruik om die drama te evalueer as 'n voorbeeld van navorsing-geleide praktyk. Die studie se primêre gevolgtrekking is dat kompleksiteit en binêre stemme gebruik moet word as teenmiddel vir restouratiewe nostalgie. Hierdie stemme kan ingespan word om die veteraan se siening van die verlede bloot te lê of teë te gaan. Die meester narratief van die dienspligtige word sodoende gedestabiliseer en die moontlikheid van 'n verantwoordelike sinmaak-proses van 'n komplekse verlede ontstaan.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father (who did not fight on the Border). He taught me to think critically and not to settle for simple answers. He has given me an education both in life and on paper. I am proud to be your daughter and I am immensely grateful for your sacrifices.

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List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
APA	American Psychiatric Association
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CML	Computer Mediated Language
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
FB	Facebook
MK	Mkhonto Wesizwe
MMC	Mighty Men Conference
MOTH	Memorable Order of Tin Hats
NP	National Party
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome
SADF	South African Defense Force
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SIG	Special Interest Groups
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
VVnW	Veterans of the Vietnam War

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Opsomming	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of abbreviations	vi
Table of Contents	vii
 CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Staging the Border War: From Protest to Remembrance	3
1.2 Personal Motivation	5
1.3 Problem Statement	6
1.4 Research Inquiry	7
1.5 Research Design	9
1.5.1 Arts-based research methodology	9
1.5.2 Research-based practice and practice-based research	10
1.5.3 Research model: Smith and Dean's Iterative cyclic web	11
1.5.4 Additional Methodologies	14
1.6 Chapter Layout	15
1.6.1 Chapter 1: Introduction	15
1.6.2 Chapter 2: Trauma and the Border War	16
1.6.3 Chapter 3: An Overview and thematic analysis of Border dramas	16
1.6.4 Chapter 4: An analysis of social media discourses surrounding the Border War	17
1.6.5 Chapter 5: Performing the Border: A new play	17
1.6.6 Chapter 6: A reflective conclusion and suggestions for further inquiry	18

CHAPTER 2

TRAUMA AND THE BORDER WAR

2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 Trauma	20
2.2.1 A short overview of the Study of Trauma	20
2.2.2 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	22
2.2.3 Introduction to Trauma Theory	23
2.2.4 Collective and Cultural Trauma	24
2.2.5 Intergenerational Trauma	25
2.2.6 Questioning Trauma	28
2.2.7 Perpetrator Trauma	30
2.2.8 Trauma and Memory	31
2.3 Performance	
2.3.1 Performing Trauma	32
2.3.2 Performing History	33
2.3.3 Performing Memory	34
2.3.4 Performing Restorative Nostalgia	35
2.3.5 Performing Postcolonial Theatre	37
2.4 The Border War	39
2.5 Towards a Master Narrative of Conscription	43
2.6 Trauma and the Border War	45
2.7 Conclusion	50

CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF BORDER DRAMAS

3.1 Introduction	52
3.2 Introduction to Border Literature (<i>Grensliteratuur</i>) and Border Dramas	52
3.2.1 Border dramas	54
3.3 Border Drama as Protest Theatre	56
3.3.1 <i>Môre is 'n lang dag</i> (Opperman 1986)	56

3.3.2 <i>Die Spinner</i> (Leach 1985)	61
3.3.3 <i>Somewhere on the border</i> (Akerman 2001)	64
3.4 Border Drama as Performances of Memory	68
3.4.1 <i>White men with weapons</i> (Coetzee 2001) and <i>Johnny Boskak is feeling funny</i> (Coetzee 2009)	68
3.4.2 <i>Boetman is die bliksem in!</i> (Fourie 2017)	71
3.4.3 <i>Soldier Boy</i> (Kobus Moolman 2007)	73
3.4.4 <i>Johnny is nie dood nie</i> (Steyn 2011)	74
3.4.5 <i>Bos</i> (Steyn 2012)	76
3.4.6 <i>Tree aan!</i> (Opperman 2012)	78
3.4.7 <i>Moffie</i> (2012)	79
3.5 Thematic commonalities in Border Dramas	83
A: A generational gap	84
B: Fathers and sons	88
C: Forgotten, Angry, Confused and Endangered (FACE)	91
D: The female perspective	97
E: Homosexuality on the Border	106
F: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	109
3.6 Conclusion	117

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSES SURROUNDING THE BORDER WAR

4.1 Introduction	119
4.2 Qualitative e-research and Social media discourse Analysis	121
4.3 (Media)ting Memory on Social Media	124
4.3.1 The Facebook group: “GRENDOORLOG / Border War 1966–1989”	126
4.4 Themes found in online discourses surrounding the Border War	127
4.4.1 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	129
4.4.2 When things were better	142
4.4.3 Questioning fathers	145

4.4.3.1 Questions	146
4.4.3.2 Commemoration	149
4.4.3.3 Honour	150
4.4.4 Remembrance	153
4.4.5 A call to arms	154
4.4.6 Mighty Men	157
4.5 Conclusion	165
 CHAPTER 5	
PERFORMING THE BORDER: A NEW PLAY	
5.1 Introduction	168
5.2 Plot and characters	168
5.3 Title: <i>Bloed en Bodem</i>	170
5.4 Setting the Play	170
5.5 Themes	178
5.6 Critical Reactions to the New Play	195
5.7 Conclusion	198
 CHAPTER 6	
A REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ENQUIRY	
6.1 Introduction	200
6.2 A Self-assessment	201
6.3 A Reflective Conclusion	204
6.4 Suggestions for Further Inquiry	212
 Reference List	213
Addendum A: <i>Bloed en Bodem</i>	226

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The educated man seeks only as much precision as the subject matter will admit. It is as foolish to seek precision from a poet as it is metaphor from a mathematician.
—Aristotle

Historians have branded the South African Border War (1966-1988) as the “Forgotten War” or the “Silent War” (Baines 2009: 214). All medically fit white South African males over the age of eighteen were obliged to perform national service from 1967, “a service which from the mid-1970s often included tours of duty on the border of Angola and South African-occupied Namibia, and later tours of duty in Angola or within the townships of South Africa herself” (Callister 2007: 1). According to Green (in Baines 2008: 214), the official death rate of white troops killed on the border, “expressed as a proportion of all white South Africans, was three times that of the US forces in Vietnam”.¹ After apartheid was abolished and democracy established in 1994, this group of men were left in a precarious position having fought “on the wrong side” of history. Theresa Edlmann (2015, online) argues that the “impact that the system of conscription had on the roughly 600 000 white men, or 7.1% of the roughly 4.2 million white people in South Africa in 1992, who became both pawns and agents of the apartheid state, has seldom been publicly acknowledged in post-apartheid South Africa”. Gary Baines (in Akerman 2012: 84) also writes about the war’s initial absence from public discourse:

“The veterans’ silence in the immediate post-apartheid years was partly encouraged by the vision of the Rainbow Nation, with its inclusionary imperative. It was deemed ‘politically correct’ to emphasise South Africa’s commonalities rather than its conflictual past.”

This changed in the year 2000 when journalist Chris Louw sparked a national debate after his open letter to the late Willem de Klerk (former editor of *Rapport* and brother of President F.W. de Klerk) entitled, “Boetman is die bliksem in [Boetman is angry]” (2014, online) which was published in a national newspaper. This was written in reaction to De Klerk’s newly published book entitled,

¹ If one looks at the statistics provided by Scholtz (2006: 39) however, these estimations appear to be a gross over-estimation of the actual numbers of soldiers lost in battle. As a proportion of the relatively small white population in South Africa at the time, Green’s projected proportion might be plausible.

Afrikaners: kroes, kras, kordaat (2000), in which he “advocates that the way to Afrikaner survival is to confess the sins of the past and to refrain from excessive political ambition” (Friedman 2000, online). Louw’s response (his public letter) to this book frames De Klerk as a symbol of the older generation of white men that engineered apartheid and the militarised society in which young white Afrikaners² had to serve. He points out the hypocrisy in De Klerk’s apologetic tones. He also expresses his generation’s disillusionment with those who were supposed to lead and father them. He argues that this generation had dug the grave for their own sons, without ever directly sharing in their suffering:

“You never tasted that humiliation, not you or your generation, you merely created the situation for it. You even phrase it better than I can – The herd instinct and tendency to bow down to authority make us followers of leaders in many areas.”

(Louw 2014, online)

This “herd instinct” of the white Afrikaner, he argues, resulted in his generation of young white Afrikaner men following this older generation blindly:

“We were taught to be seen and not heard, to do as told without backchat, to show respect for our elders. To, at the drop of a hat, be prepared to sacrifice our lives for our country and the greater cause. I am talking about white Afrikaner men between 30 and 50, the guys who were branded by National Service.”

(Louw 2014, online)

This manipulation on the part of De Klerk’s generation resulted in Louw’s generation, the so-called Boetman generation, upholding the values of the “ooms” (uncles). Propaganda and the abuse of semantics that accompany propaganda, played into this war of perception. De Klerk, being the editor of a right-wing newspaper (*Die Transvaler*) which notoriously upheld the apartheid government’s values, is shown to contribute to Boetman’s feelings of confusion after the war:

² Coming to terms with terms: “It is necessary to find a working term to define the group of people I will mainly be referring to as the white Afrikaners. In recent years the term ‘Afrikaner’ has been contested and expanded to include all Afrikaans speakers, thus a linguistically defined group (Van Heerden, 2009: 16). It has historically been used to narrow this group down ethnically as well to only include white Afrikaans speakers – predominantly colonists of Dutch, German, Khoi and French origin (Van Heerden 2009: 16). In this study, this group will be referred to as white Afrikaners.” (Albertyn 2015: 19). For a comprehensive overview of the group’s history, see Herman Gilliomee’s *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (2003).

“My generation was taught from the cradle to play with words, words that seldom had the meanings seen in the dictionary. Think about concepts like ‘democracy’, ‘nationalism’, ‘self-government’, ‘independent states’, even the noun that my friends were sent to the border for, and some were never to return, ‘South Africa’.”
(Louw 2014, online)

This letter “expressed the frustrations of middle-aged white men, who felt the old National Party’s ‘patriarchs’ had betrayed them by sending them to the border to fight in an unwinnable war” (Keppler 2009, online). Chris Louw later wrote a book, *Boetman en die swanesang van die verligtes*³ (2012). Koos Kombuis writes that this book highlights the fact that the misunderstandings were not only between black and white, but also between generations of the same race (2017, online). Louw shot himself in 2009 with an AK47 after emailing a colleague, writing: “I’m simply ‘gatvol’. There’s no sense in muddling on” (Keppler 2009, online).

1.1 Staging the Border War: From Protest to Remembrance

The events that led to Louw’s outrage are reflected in a South African/Namibian literary genre, consisting mostly of Afrikaans works with the Border War as theme or motif, known as Border Literature or *Grensliteratuur* (Gordon 1991: 91; Kannemeyer 2005: 680–681; Luwes & Van Jaarsveld 2006: 388; Reddy 2005: 122;). Acclaimed Afrikaans playwright, Deon Opperman, wrote his first play about his Border experience as a conscript, *Môre is ‘n Lang Dag* (1986), which was first performed in 1984 – the height of the apartheid regime. *Môre is ‘n Lang Dag* (1986) has been discussed against the backdrop of the Border literature and, more specifically, the Border drama discourse in overviews of Opperman’s oeuvre (Luwes & Van Jaarsveld 2006: 388) as well as in essays such as Vasu Reddy’s article: “Wit mans toegerus met wapens: Die grenstematiek in drie verwante dramatekste”⁴ (2005). These studies discuss *Môre is ‘n Lang Dag* (1986) and other Border plays within the context of their conception at a time when the Border War was still in full swing. The function of this play is thus part protest, part documentary. Reddy (2005: 122) states that the Border War itself is not the central aspect that the play revolves around and that the border merely serves as a metaphor. Like most others, he reads the play in the context of its original function as protest theatre. However, this function became semi-irrelevant in post-apartheid and post-war South Africa.

³ Trans. “Boetman and the swan song of the liberals”.

⁴ Trans. “White men armed with weapons: The Border themes in three related dramas”.

One may argue that, by using “memory as a weapon” (Hutchinson 1999, title page) in dealing with the traumas of the past, *Border War* plays written after the war, retrospectively, may serve to prevent a repetition of the past. Van Heerden (2008: 112) refers to this brand of theatre as “dealing with the past, while looking at the present”. As “most of the trauma they [conscripts] might have experienced remains unspoken” (Edlmann 2015), and “soldiers were seldom afforded any opportunity to face up to traumatic and life-altering experiences” (Baines 2008: 217), the need for a healthy discourse about the memories of the Border War is imminent. Memory as a weapon can, however, become problematic when its original critique is inverted to promote ideals of nationalism by exploiting the veterans dealing with trauma.

Môre is 'n Lang Dag (1986) by Deon Opperman was first created as a student production that harshly criticized the conscription system and nationalist climate of the day (Reddy 2005: 106). The original production had a modest budget and a small cast that had to make do with the confines of a student competition (Krüger 2013: 432–433). Opperman’s disillusionment with the white Afrikaner, “I thought the Afrikaners were a bunch of shits”⁵ (Krueger 2006, online), led to a drama that mixed realism with the absurd, so as to emphasize the absurdity of war (Krüger 2013: 431; Kannemeyer 2005: 680–681). The aim of the author’s writing appears thus in part therapeutic in the sense of “working through”⁶ (LaCapra 1999: 697) the traumatic event by disclosing it, and in part documentary in the hope of making sense of a seemingly illogical and traumatic war experience.

In 2011, however, Opperman adapted *Môre is 'n Lang Dag* (1986) into a musical, *Tree aan!*. Unlike the modest production of the original play, *Tree aan!* (2011), produced by Opperman’s own company, Packed House Productions, cost “a few million rand” (Opperman 2011) and, with an extended run, the production was deemed a commercial success (Krüger 2013: 431). This large budget led to a much larger cast and to more possibilities with regards to set, scene and music which could, in turn, deliver the showmanship and spectacle of the typical musical as expected by audiences (Krüger 2013: 431). According to Krüger (2013: 437), “contrary to *Tree aan!* (2011), *Môre is 'n Lang Dag* (1986) questions the status quo and interprets the historical events not from

⁵ Trans. “Ek het gedink die Afrikaners is 'n klomp kakke”.

⁶ In the field of Trauma studies, in which Dominic LaCapra is a pioneer, the “working through” can only happen in a country when a “complicated past ... [is] disclosed truthfully” (1999: 697). His writings on the TRC is based on this premise: healing and reconciliation by disclosure. This has been challenged by scholars in recent years, claiming that this is a singular approach, Western in its presuppositions, and not suited as a “one-size-fits-all” approach to trauma in the collective.

the vantage point of another era but from the perspective of the conscript”.⁷ The critical thinking present in *Môre is 'n Lang Dag* (1986) unfortunately gets lost in *Tree aan!* (2011). Marli Katzke (2014: 95) writes in her overview of the South African musical that Opperman’s work “seems to serve as a voice for the patriotic white, Afrikaans-speaking culture in post-apartheid South Africa”.⁸ She also says that this “leg of the musical form seems to be unique to South Africa in its chosen subjects and material”.⁹ What Krüger (2013: 437) calls “restorative nostalgia” stands central to this musical that speaks of “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed”. This restoration of history becomes problematic when it is used to promote nationalism – white Afrikaner nationalism in this case (Krüger 2013: 449).

The plays above have tried to engage with an issue that has attracted very little traction from the post-apartheid South African Government. Veterans still have to engage with the meaning of the Border War and a process of meaning-making of past events is reflected in the plays above.

1.2 Personal Motivation

I was about twelve years old when I first read Marita van der Vyver’s novel, *Die dinge van 'n kind* (2016). It deals with the Border War and its young people who were forced into conscription. It also describes a militarised society where nationalism was the norm. I remember being shocked as I had been mostly unaware of the colossal impact this had had on its soldiers – soldiers who were of my father’s generation. While he had ‘luckily’ been drafted into the Navy, most of my friends’ fathers had not escaped the horrors of the Border War. The father of one of my friends had a prosthetic leg because of a hand grenade that exploded whilst serving on the Border. I remember hearing stories of a farmer in our area who was afraid to stray too far from his farm because of his PTSD symptoms of social anxiety after the Border War. His farm was battling financially because of the deep depression he fell into years after the war had ended. His son was struggling to come to terms with his emotionally absent father who had left the task of saving the farm to his young son. Even at that age, it seemed to me that, for a war that had ended so recently, its victims were strangely quiet about their traumas. I sensed that to speak of the war was a sort of taboo amongst these men; a trauma that had not been dealt with. Later, as a postgraduate student, I did my Honours

⁷ Trans. “in teenstelling met *Tree aan!* (2011), bevraagteken *Môre is 'n Lang Dag* (1986) die status quo en interpreteer die historiese gebeure, nie vanuit die oogpunt van 'n ander tydperk nie, maar vanuit die perspektief van 'n dienspligtige”.

⁸ Trans. “blyk om te dien as ‘n spreekbuis vir die patriotiese blanke, Afrikaanssprekende kultuur in Post-Apartheid Suid-Afrika.”

⁹ This “leg” would include Opperman’s other musical, *Ons vir Jou* (2008), a heroic depiction of the Boer War/Great War which was the most expensive musical ever produced in South Africa.

research assignment on two performances of Deon Opperman's *Môre is 'n Lang Dag* (1986), one during the war and one after the war, and I investigated the differences in audience reception and appropriated meaning in the different contexts. This inspired my further research into the Border War and its largely silent aftermath.

1.3 Problem Statement

The Border War plays that were written after the apartheid era have attempted to engage in a process of meaning-making of the past¹⁰. One of the major themes in these plays about the Border War is that of trauma and memory. National identities are often shaped around perceived traumas or victimisation¹¹. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa – and considering the role the SADF played in upholding this inhumane system – to see the veteran simply as a traumatised victim would be a gross over-simplification.¹² This has the potential of undoing fragile social cohesions and heightening prejudice if these the identity of the conscript is not questioned and critically engaged:

“As a resistant whiteness, the constellation of the victim has been highly salient in the discourses of Afrikaner whiteness. They saw themselves as besieged, having to fight for the ‘right’ to their own brand of white supremacy, in which claiming the land for themselves and appropriating black labour featured prominently. The role of such feelings of prior, and even continuing, victimisation of the Afrikaner by the British in bringing about the mindset that enacted the brutal racism of apartheid fits a pattern that has been recognised in other perpetrator groups.”

(Steyn 2004: 146)

These old notions of victimisation are echoed by Border War veterans on social media sites such as Facebook, where “(cyber) space” becomes the place where “their previously discredited voices [are] heard in post-apartheid South Africa” (Baines 2008: 224). Some of the rhetoric seems to fall into potentially dangerous nationalistic, right-winged discourses fuelled by their perceived

¹⁰ “*Tree aan!* (2011) attempts, as a historical drama, to process the traumatic past of the Border War, make sense of its repercussions and confirm Afrikaner identity.” (Krüger 2013: 419)

¹¹ “The rise of extreme Afrikaner nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century is generally understood as a reaction to the defeat of the Boer forces in the South African (Anglo-Boer) War of 1899–1902. (Steyn, 2004: 145)

¹² See Chapter 2 for a discussion of “perpetrator trauma”. See Chapter 3 for a discussion on the impact of trauma and the estimation of the number of veterans impacted by PTSD.

position as victims of an unjust system in the past and their marginalisation in contemporary South Africa.¹³ Contemporary stage representations of the Border War, such as *Tree Aan!* (2011), also seem to lose their critical perspective on the events that took place during the Border War. This leads to what Krüger (2013: 439) calls “restorative nostalgia”, where historical events are oversimplified in a distorted manner to promote old notions of nationalism and an idealisation of an old regime. She warns that this places the individual audience member in an uncomfortable and prescriptive position (Ibid.)¹⁴.

In representing the Border War on stage (i.e. writing a play), the playwright has to contend with the problem of representing and remembering the traumas and memories of conscripts in a way that avoids falling into the trap of restorative nostalgia. The theatre-maker also has to find a way to represent the Border War with enough complexity and ambiguity so to avoid absolving conscripts of collective guilt. At the same time, they would have to be careful not to exclude these voices as failing to engage with their perceptions of the past could lead to a strengthening of their perception as being marginalised and excluded from the public discourse.

1.4 Research Inquiry¹⁵

Since the inception of the form, the drama as an art form has reflected the complex relationship that exists between identity, trauma and war. The contemporary ideas and views on identity and history have shaped the plays that portray (whether indirectly or directly) the traumatic event and its aftermath. In a sense, these ever-changing representations of the same event (the war), different plays on the same event (the war), come to reflect something of the *zeitgeist* and ideas of the time. Although it has only been a short time since the end of the Border War (and the apartheid era) the plays that reflect this event have been divergent and have reflected significant changes in the collective perception of the past. It is important to look at the themes reflected by these plays and how these themes have evolved in their thematic exploration. To simply equate the various playwrights’ insights with the “discredited voices” (Baines 2008: 224) of the white South African

¹³ “In a time when the Afrikaner feels increasingly marginalised and demonised, Opperman creates a platform with *Tree aan!* where the Afrikaner can express him- or herself, as was the case with his earlier *Ons vir jou*. In the theatre programme, Opperman (2011: 9) states that *Tree aan!* depicts his people’s history and asks how Afrikaners should know who they are today, and dream their own future, if they do not have the right to remember their past. *Tree aan!* thus forms part of the Afrikaner’s search for identity in a post-Apartheid era.” (Krüger 2013: 412)

¹⁴ Trans. “‘n baie voorskryflike, en potensieel ongemaklike, posisie”

¹⁵ A note on the terms used: I have chosen to use the term “research inquiry” as opposed to “research question” as this is more suitable to the type of arts-based research I am about to conduct. Work done in arts-based research within the “practice as research” (PaR) or “research as practice” (RaP) fields does not yield “solutions to problems in the mode of answers” (Nelson 2013: 96).

collective affected by conscription, would be an over-simplification of the artist's relation to society. It is thus important to compare the discourses and themes found on stage with those found in the mouths of conscripts. Most of the playwrights who have created these plays on the Border War, have themselves either served as conscripts (Deon Opperman) or suffered the consequences of being conscientious objectors (Anthony Akerman) and thus have very distinct views about the meanings of the event. Attempting to portray the contemporary zeitgeist of post-apartheid South Africa would mean not only identifying their voices as artists, but also those outside the theatre.

Social media has become a relatively safe space where these veterans' "previously discredited voices [are] heard in post-apartheid South Africa" (Baines 2008: 224). The themes found on stage should be compared to those found in these online discourses so to voice more truthfully the current views surrounding the war and to critically examine the impact of these views on a fragile new democracy. This is also of cardinal importance as the traumas of the SADF's veterans could be classified as those of the perpetrator. The representation of the traumatic event in a responsible, truthful and nuanced manner is thus pre-eminent when dealing with a group coming to terms with the shame of their past. As the white Afrikaner's nationalist identity in the apartheid era was significantly shaped by notions of victimhood suffered at the hands of the British¹⁶, the identity of suffering and victimhood over trauma cannot be treated without being balanced by questions of culpability and ownership of the perpetrator's past. In a critique of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's (TRC) process and methods, Avruch (2010: 35, my emphasis) warns of its shortcomings:

"The emphasis here is on the production of an *account* of what happened. More difficult questions, political and moral ones, of *accountability*, are less adequately addressed by these commissions."

As a playwright from the second generation with no lived experiences of serving as a conscript or being part of a militarised society, and as a woman, protected from the SADF's gendered policies

¹⁶ "It is common knowledge that the Afrikaner government that came into power in 1948 was responsible for the introduction of the policy of apartheid, which institutionalised abuse of state power and implemented extreme racial oppression. Yet, ironically, it would be a mistake to read the racial domination thus entrenched as emanating from a group that felt secure in their power. Afrikaners contended with the more powerful forces of the British Empire throughout a history that was experienced as a long and bitter struggle for freedom from white-on-white overlordship. The self-esteem, indeed the very self-image, of Afrikaner nationhood was forged within a mythology that celebrated the courage of a people who refused to be subordinate to the British Empire on more than one occasion in their history. The rise of extreme Afrikaner nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century is generally understood as a reaction to the defeat of the Boer forces in the South African (Anglo-Boer) War of 1899-1902." (Steyn, 2004: 145)

on conscription, this provides me with a (semi)outsider's perspective on these discourses. A play created from the observation and analysis of identified themes can reflect my findings both on stage and online. It can attempt to fill in some of the spaces where the online voices have either been misrepresented, or where they have been treated without due critical thinking in their representation on stage. The written play can act as an artefact of the qualitative findings in my observation of both the plays and the online discourses. This play, an example of research-based art, will be "accessible to much broader audiences" as opposed to "the highly specialised data journals, academic jargon and particulars of traditional academic writing" which "often keep[s] audiences from benefitting directly from research" (Leavy 2010: 344).

The primary research inquiry in this dissertation can be framed as such:

How can one utilise social media discourses on the Border War to generate thematic material for the creation of a new play that deals with trauma of the war and its role in the formation of white South African identity, without falling into the trap of "restorative nostalgia" (Krüger 2013: 439) or an over-simplification of the traumatized veteran as singularly victim or perpetrator?

Some other questions flow from this:

- What are some of the current collective memories of the Border War as seen on social media sites such as Facebook?
- How is the Border War remembered on the South African stage and how does this memory compare with other narratives such as online sources of the Border War?
- How is the construction of the war's narrative – "meaning construction" – affecting the formation of post-apartheid identities? (Leavy 2010: 344)

1.5 Research Design

1.5.1 Arts-based research methodology

The play that will be written and the process of its conception as a method to address the questions above, fall under the relatively new methodology called arts-based research. Barone and Eisner's theorisation of this approach makes it clear that "arts based research does not yield propositional claims about the states of affairs", but rather tries "to create insight into the states of affairs whose utility is tested when those insights are applied to understand what has been addressed in the

research” (2011: 3). I think this expected outcome of understanding and insight is feasible as opposed to a quantitative method that would propose to “yield propositional claims about the states of affairs” (2011: 3). The central philosophy of arts-based research can be summed up as follows:

- Recognizes that art has been able to convey truth(s) or bring about awareness (both knowledge of the self and knowledge of others).
- Recognizes that the use of art is critical in achieving self/other knowledge.
- Values preverbal ways of knowing.
- Includes multiple ways of knowing, such as sensory, kinaesthetic, and imaginary.

(Leavy 2017: 195)

The above philosophical statements directly address the research inquiry as the plays in question have created a space where issues regarding a “silent war” have been voiced loudly. The “awareness (both knowledge of the self and knowledge of others)” brought about by plays performed in the past is thus especially valuable and critical to a process of meaning-making (Leavy 2017: 195). As the research inquiry addresses questions of trauma (the unspeakable), embodiment and the non-verbal aspects of performance are significant. Arts-based research is a framework in which these elements of the traumatic event are not ignored or made less of than the narrative/written experience, but explored and re-imagined. While the other senses are explored in the arts, this “preverbal” (Ibid.) exploration has the potential to voice the “unspeakable”, to avoid what Dori Laub calls “the collapse of witnessing” (Caruth 1995: 10).¹⁷ The arts, the stage, can provide an alternative space in which knowledge and historical narratives can be unsettled and re-examined.

1.5.2 Research-based practice and practice-based research

Since my thesis will be led by the creation of a new play – which aims to both explore and represent the research inquiry – it falls into the broader paradigm of practice-led research and research-based practice:

¹⁷ An excellent example of this is the play created as a reaction to – and in conversation with – the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (2007). The director, William Kentridge (2007: 11) says that “our theatre is a reflection on the debate rather than the debate itself” and that “it tries to make sense of the memory rather than be the memory”. The traumatic testimony of victims were voiced through puppets so that “the puppet becomes a medium through which testimony can be heard” (Kentridge 2007: 11). The arts thus become a way voicing the “unspeakable” (Caruth 1995: 10).

“The emergent field of practice-led research is a unique research paradigm that situates creative practice as both a driver and outcome of the research process.”

(Hamilton & Jaaniste 2009: 1)

The traditional doctoral thesis takes the form of the “seven-chapter model of the empirical sciences” which has “the order of: introduction; literature review; methodology; data collection; data analysis; findings and conclusion” (Ibid.: 5). However, this is not an appropriate model for a practice-led research project as it fails to “reflect the way that such research unfolds in practice where creative work is both the impetus for, and the outcome of, the research process” (Ibid.). Postgraduate researchers in the arts, media and design disciplines have pursued an alternative model of the practice-led research doctoral thesis since the 1990s (Ibid.). An alternative model is thus necessary to accommodate this type of research.

1.5.3 Research model: Smith and Dean’s Iterative cyclic web

I will be employing Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web model to anchor and guide the research project. Their model of creative and research processes, as illustrated below, “accommodates practice-led research and research-led practice, creative work and basic research” (Smith & Dean 2009: 8). This research model is especially suited to research that “feed[s] into creative writing” (Smith & Dean 2009: 8). Since a central part of my research inquiry involves the writing of a play, this model is ideal to frame such an inquiry. Smith and Dean’s (2009: 19) model is illustrated below:



Figure 1: The iterative cyclic web model (Smith & Dean 2009: 19)

This model is described by the authors as follows:

“The structure of the model combines a cycle and several sub-cycles (demonstrated by the larger circle and smaller ovoids) with a web (the criss-cross, branching lines across the circle) created by many points of entry and transition within the cycle. One intention of Fig. 1.1 is to suggest how a creative or research process may start at any point on the large cycle illustrated and move, spider-like, to any other. Very important in the model, with regard to the sub-cycles, is the concept of iteration, which is fundamental to both creative and research processes. To iterate a process is to repeat it several times (though probably with some variation) before proceeding, setting up a cycle: start-end-start. The creator must chose [sic] between the alternative results created by the iteration, focusing on some and leaving others behind (temporarily or permanently). In a research phase, this can be viewed as a selection based on empirical data and analytical/theoretical fit; in a practice phase the choice might be aesthetic, technical or ideological, or somewhat random.”

(Smith & Dean 2009: 19)

What makes this model particularly attractive is its emphasis on choosing within the process to focus on some ideas and to leave others. This model accommodates the fact that creative practice is unpredictable and non-linear. The way in which the research will influence the writing of the new play is not clear from the outset. The fact that the model emphasizes the iteration of academic research as well, means that different avenues can be explored and others abandoned and picked up again. This process is explained by the authors as follows:

“In the process of selection the researcher/practitioner decides which are the best of most useful realisations derived from the task, and discards or temporarily puts aside others.”

(Smith & Dean 2009: 22)

This model is a more authentic and organic illustration the process of creative writing and research than more traditional linear models that do not emphasise iteration. The fact that the “idea generation” aspect is constantly in flux on the academic research side of the model, acknowledges the fact that research is rarely a linear process, especially within the arts. The research will take place in the following steps as outlined by the model above (adapted from Gerber 2017: 10):

1. Academic Research
 - a. Generate ideas
 - b. Select an empirical approach (subjective or systematic)
 - c. Investigate data, ideas and/or relevant theory
 - d. Develop, interpret and synthesise new data or ideas
 - i. Output: methods, results, ideas, critical accounts, theorisations as research publications
 - e. Test the theory empirically or refine through comparison and argument
 - i. Output: new technique, theory or paradigm
2. Research-led practice
 - a. Develop chosen ideas
 - i. Output: documentation of the artwork and its production
 - ii. Artwork
 - b. Theorise ideas and develop techniques as method
 - i. Output: theories and techniques

3. Academic Research

- a. Test the theory empirically or refine the theory/ideas through comparison and argument
 - i. Output: new technique, theory or paradigm

Engaging with the research inquiry above whilst employing Smith and Dean's iterative cyclic web model would entail five stages or tiers:

1. The first stage would entail orientating myself in the theory of trauma, war and memory so to better understand the themes I will be exploring (see Chapters 1 and 2).
2. The second stage of the process would be to situate myself within the lineage of practice i.e. to give an overview of the plays written on the Border War and to identify recurring themes found in its representation (see Chapter 3)
3. The third component would entail analysing and identifying recurring themes found in an online platform for veterans. (see Chapter 4)
4. The fourth stage would be to critically compare the two "worlds" of representation and to see where they overlap and where they diverge. These two worlds are the one on stage – i.e. plays written about the Border War – and the other world is the one found online where veterans engage in a meaning-making process on social media. (see Chapter 5)
5. The fifth stage would be to reflect these findings in a play as a "textual [representation] of research data" (Leavy 2008: 143). (see Chapter 6)

I would like to examine ways in which one can deal with the Border War trauma in a newly created play whilst being aware of the dangers of "restorative nostalgia". After creating this play, I will aim to critically analyse whether the work avoided this trap or whether it fell into this pitfall. The application of Smith and Dean's Iterative web model in this process will be discussed in the section below which outlines the different thesis chapters.

1.5.4 Additional Methodologies

Although I will be employing Smith and Dean's iterative cyclic web model to explore the research enquiry which is rooted in the field of Arts-based research, it is necessary to mention that the use of this model includes some of the methods used in a more traditional qualitative study. Although these additional methodologies were developed under the qualitative framework, for the purposes of this enquiry they will be used within an arts-based research framework. It is important to note

that, whilst the qualitative research methodologies often overlap with the arts-based research paradigm, arts-based research should be viewed as a distinct research paradigm and not as a sub-field of qualitative practice.¹⁸ These methodologies and theories will be elaborated on in the relevant chapters as this way of working fits in with the iterative cyclic web model as the theories are constantly being adapted, and chosen in this process of iteration.

Some of the qualitative methodologies I will use will include historical overviews of theoretical fields, such as in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will include a textual and thematic analysis of plays written about the Border War and will thus draw on the field of Theatre Studies. The fourth chapter will draw on fields within the quantitative framework: that of Critical Discourse Analysis, Social Discourse Analysis and Online Discourse Analysis. These methods will be adapted to explore the research enquiry but should not be seen as the primary methodological framework. These methods are secondary tools within the larger framework of arts-based research and within the iterative cyclic web model as I am not an expert in the fields of History, Psychology or Linguistics (discourse analysis). Although I will attempt to orientate myself with the basic theoretical backgrounds of these fields where necessary, the primary aims of the research lie in the field of arts-based research where the creative output stands prominently in the exploration of the enquiry.

1.6 Chapter layout

1.6.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 forms part of the left-hand side of the iterative cyclic web: “academic research” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). The “selection of empirical approach” was done in this chapter as it outlines the methodology chosen to explore the research inquiry. It stays within this bubble and leads to the next chapter where the next phase will be engaged with.

Chapter 1 has introduced the various complexities surrounding the conceptualization of a Border War play. It has outlined the research inquiry broadly in a way that leaves room for further exploration and reiteration. This inquiry’s methodological framework has been explained in this chapter: that of arts-based research and more specifically, practice-based research and research-

¹⁸ See Barone and Eisner’s *Arts based research* (2011) for a comprehensive overview of the field and an analysis of how it distinguishes itself from the traditional research paradigms of the quantitative and the qualitative.

based practice. The iterative cyclic web that will be used to build the research was also introduced, as well as how this will feed into the thesis in the chapter layout.

1.6.2 Chapter 2: Trauma and the Border War

Chapter 2 is also on the left-hand side of the cycle that engages in academic research, but it also includes the “investigation of data, ideas and/or relevant theory” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). Chapter 2 will outline the theoretical background of the study. This will include a historical overview and introduction to Trauma and Trauma Studies. The performance of history, memory, nostalgia and postcolonial theatre will then be discussed. The prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) in Border War veterans will also be discussed in this chapter. The relevant theory is thus explored in this chapter which will provide the background against which to “develop, interpret and synthesize new data or ideas” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) in the chapters to follow.

1.6.3 Chapter 3: An Overview and thematic analysis of Border Dramas

Chapter 3 moves further down the cycle to the phase in which I will “develop, interpret and synthesize new data or ideas” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). This will also lead to an “output” – as a thematic analysis is a “critical account” – and “ideas”. In Chapter 3, I will aim to contextualise the history of the Border War and the literary genre known as *Grensliteratuur*. I will then proceed to critically analyse past Border War dramas¹⁹. In order to create a play about the war I firstly need to analyse the themes already explored on stage. In practice-based research and research-based practice, this practice of overview of existing works is critical as it orientates the researcher in the “lineage of practice”. This is also known as a “context model” in which the researcher gives the societal and creative “context for the creative work” (Milech & Schilo 2004: 6). Hamilton and Jaaniste (2009: 5) describe this model as follows:

“... the researcher chooses a topic of discussion from one or more of the wider contexts of the creative practice, such as theoretical and philosophical frameworks, an historical or critical analysis of related practitioners and precedents, or the professional and industrial conditions of the practice. (...) the context model provides a discussion on the subject

¹⁹ See Chapter 3 for the selection criteria used to determine which Border War dramas to discuss.

matter or theme of a narrative-based creative work (such as a film, documentary, play or novel).”

In this chapter I hope to extrapolate themes from the “related practitioners and precedents” who have written Border War dramas in the past. This will enable me to make comparisons with the themes found in social media discourses online in the following chapter.

1.6.4 Chapter 4: An analysis of Social Media discourses surrounding the Border War

Chapter 4 stays within the same phase as Chapter 3 as it will “develop, interpret and synthesize new data or ideas” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) of another kind. This will again lead to an “output” as a thematic analysis is a “critical account” which includes new “ideas” about this data. Chapter 4 will be made up of research done observing social media discourses. This will involve discourse analysis of the comments on the Facebook group “GRENSOORLOG/Border War 1966–1989”. This process returns to the start of the iterative cyclic web (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) as it involves the phase of again selecting an approach and ideas to explore. This involves also choosing which ideas and themes to leave out of the discussion. I will identify the themes Border War veterans engage with online in order to compare it with those found in the plays written about the Border War in the previous chapter.

1.6.5 Chapter 5: Performing the Border: A new play

Chapter 5 will move further down the iterative cyclic web (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) into the phase in which I will “test the theory empirically or refine the theory/ideas through comparison and argument” which will, in turn, lead to an output in the form of “a theory or paradigm” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). This phase will include a comparison of the themes found in the lineage of practice on Border War plays in Chapter 3 with the themes found on social media discourses as explored in Chapter 4. This links with Smith & Dean’s (2009: 19) description of the process in which the researcher will “test the theory empirically or refine the theory/ideas through comparison and argument.”

This chapter will also include a discussion of the newly written play. It thus also includes the bottom part of the iterative cyclic web model (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) and moves from “academic research” to “research-led practice” in this phase. This research within the cycle goes in another

direction and moves across the iterative cyclic web to the “develop chosen ideas” phase in which the artwork is the output and the process is documented. The feedback on the newly written play will be included in this chapter. This feedback is summarised as part of the “theorising of ideas” phase in the cycle.

1.6.6 Chapter 6: A Reflective conclusion and suggestions for further Inquiry

The last chapter will link with the fifth chapter in that it will incorporate the feedback received from critics with my personal reflections on the newly written play to evaluate how successful the play had been in grappling with the research inquiry. This is also part of the “theorising of ideas” phase in the iterative cyclic web (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). This will include a return to the “academic research” part of the web as I will use an arts-based research framework to evaluate the play, thus returning to the phase in which one can “test the theory empirically or refine the theory/ideas through comparison and argument” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). I will conclude this chapter with ideas for further inquiries, thus returning to the “idea generation” phase – the iterative cyclic web having come full circle.

CHAPTER 2

TRAUMA AND THE BORDER WAR

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the theoretical background of the study. This “investigation of relevant theories” will provide the background against which to “develop, interpret and synthesize new data or ideas” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) in the chapters to follow. In an attempt to anchor my research and to avoid casting the proverbial net too wide, I have framed the various theoretical fields engaged in the discourse of the representation of the past in the performance context (see the sections on performing trauma, history and memory). Although I will begin each section with a broad overview of the field itself, I will return to its function within the sphere of stage performance.

As the research inquiry is concerned with exploring trauma whilst avoiding nostalgia, it is paramount that this field of study be understood as a background to the Border War experience. Of equal importance is the balance one has to strike in dealing with the trauma (perceived or real), whilst acknowledging the complex nature of the SADF veteran as a participant and a cog that upheld an unjust regime.²⁰ An introduction to the field of trauma theory will be followed by a discussion of collective and cultural trauma. This will lead to an extrapolation of the relatively new field of inquiry called intergenerational trauma. A section will follow that questions these traditional notions of trauma, its treatment and its criteria. Perpetrator trauma will also be discussed as this frames some of the subsequent discussions with many veterans falling into this category. This chapter will attempt to orientate the research in the field of trauma studies. This will include a short overview of the study of trauma and will be followed by the criteria used to diagnose post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Another core aspect of the research inquiry involves the avoidance of dangerous nostalgia or “restorative nostalgia” (Krüger 2013: 439) on stage. To understand this phenomenon it is necessary

²⁰ This extent to which the SADF is responsible for this is discussed in Chapter 3. For this section, the reader can merely note the moral ambiguity inherent in any discussion of trauma as synonymous with victimhood where SADF veterans are concerned.

to have a background against which to frame this inquiry. Firstly, the performance of trauma will be discussed. After this, the performance of history, memory, and postcolonial theatre will be discussed. This lays the foundation for a discussion of the Border War and what a master narrative of conscription might mean, as well as how this might manifest on stage. Finally, studies on trauma and its relationship to the Border War provide a theoretical background to the research I will undertake in the following chapters.

2.2 Trauma

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III, 1980) defines trauma as an event involving a recognisable stressor that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost everyone. Leys (2007: 94) notes that this definition has many ambiguities and that the phrase, “a recognisable stressor” leaves much room for interpretation. It is because of this very loose definition that Visser (2011: 274) asserts that in trauma theory, *trauma* refers “not so much to the traumatic event as to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage”.

2.2.1 A Short Overview of the Study of Trauma

Prior to the mid-1800s, the word “trauma” was used exclusively to describe injuries to the physical body inflicted by an external event. Around 1860 it was reported that witnesses of industrial factory accidents began to show symptoms of trauma without any visible physical injury (Darity 2008: 440). It is around this time that doctors coined the term “traumatic neurosis”, to describe the symptoms these patients were displaying. These symptoms “typically included mutism, amnesia, tics, paralysis, recurrent nightmares, and, in some extreme cases, psychic dissociation” (Ibid.).

The history of psychological trauma can roughly be divided up into three distinct waves. The first wave of research on trauma which proliferated in the twentieth century was intrinsically interwoven with this period’s fixation on hysteria. Neurologist Jean-Martin Charot documented the “neurobiological symptoms of hysteria in his studies of young women who were beggars, prostitutes, or insane” (Gordon & Alpert 2012: 489). Josef Breuer, Pierre Jannet, Sigmund Freud (and later Carl Jung) took this research further. This period is marked by Freud’s studies on childhood sexuality and sexual trauma and/or abuse. Freud’s first work on hysteria, *Studies on Hysteria* (2009), dealt mainly with traumatic experiences that had been repressed into the patient’s subconscious. As with Charot, treatment was primarily based on hypnotherapy to unearth buried

trauma with the end goal of getting the patient to verbalise the unspeakable. In his later work, he started to challenge the trauma as an event. In the late 1890s, he developed a theory instead which proposes that the condition (hysteria) is not caused by actual traumatic experiences of a sexual nature (e.g. assault), but by the repression of infantile sexual erotic experiences or fantasies (Visser 2011: 274). These fantasies only become traumatic when the child (in puberty) reconstructs the memory and understands the event retrospectively. The trauma is thus based on the remembering of the event and is intrinsically linked with the temporal, what Freud calls “*Nachträglichkeit* (belatedness) or retro determination which has become a central concept in trauma theory” (Ibid.: 273).

While the above-mentioned first wave of inquiry into trauma was concerned almost exclusively with the female experience of trauma with regards to hysteria, the second wave of enquiry was characterised by a masculine experience of war which led to the first writings on what would much later be called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The term, “shell-shock”, was first described in England after the First World War “and reached its peak in the United States after the Vietnam War” (Gordon & Alpert 2012: 489). At first, the symptoms soldiers displayed after returning from combat – which looked exactly like what Freud had thought to have had sexual origins – were thought to be immoral. Soldiers were accused of laziness and cowardice (Ibid.). It was only after the rise of the left-wing anti-war movement, which marked the 1960s, that this type of war trauma was destigmatised²¹ by soldiers and veterans who spoke of their trauma publicly (Ibid.). However, it was only in 1980 that the American Psychiatric Association officially recognised PTSD as a category in its manual, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition (DSM-III)* (1980).

Whilst the second wave of enquiry into trauma was largely based on a very tactile, concrete traumatic event with a clear temporal boundary (e.g. the time a soldier served in an army), the third wave that began in the 1970s started as a reaction to the rise of feminism in the Western world. A clear difference between theory coming from this period and that of the second wave, was the distinction between the public and the private/domestic sphere. Violence against women and domestic abuse was something largely hidden from public view. Unlike combat scenarios and

²¹ The destigmatisation of PTSD in veterans and soldiers is of course not a linear process with a beginning and an end and remains a problem today. This debate was recently brought to the public’s attention by David Finkel’s *Thank You for Your Service* (2013), which documents soldiers’ returning to civilian life after serving in Iraq. It was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and was also made into a Hollywood film of the same name. This book highlights the army’s militarised culture as one culpable for creating an environment in which mental health issues are rampant.

experiences of war where the enemy was a clearly defined as the “other”, the domestic space complicated this experience of trauma as perpetrators were “one of our own”. Another contributing factor to this enquiry was, of course, the sexual revolution that characterised the 1960s and 1970s, which paved the way for victims to talk publicly about previously taboo topics such as rape and incest.

After this third wave, “contemporary trauma researchers and practitioners [have] embraced an interdisciplinary approach toward better understanding the psychology of the traumatic experience ...” and it is “now recognized that trauma results in biological, psychological, and social changes, and a diagnostic classification that only lists symptoms, is insufficient” (Gordon & Alpert 2012:489).

2.2.2 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that is largely concerned with the trauma of the individual. It is from this definition that other theories on trauma have emerged (see below). Unlike other psychiatric disorders, however, “PTSD is unique among psychiatric diagnoses because of the great importance placed upon the etiological agent, the traumatic stressor” (Friedman 2016). According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5 2013: 271-272)²², PTSD can only be diagnosed if the following criteria are met:

- A. “Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence ...”
- B. “Presence of ... intrusion symptoms related to the traumatic event(s)...”
- C. “Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s) ...”
- D. “Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s) ...”
- E. “Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s) ...”
- F. “Duration of the disturbance (Criterion B, C, D and E) is more than 1 month.”
- G. “The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.”

²² For the purposes of this study, I will be using the DSM-5 as my primary framework to discuss symptoms of PTSD. The DSM-5 has been criticised as diagnostics manual in non-Western countries, however, and should not be read without paying attention its critics’ concerns. I touch on this later on in this chapter in the section, “questioning trauma”. I have chosen to use it however, as South African professionals in both the psychiatric and psychological communities use this to diagnose patients. A Border War veteran seeking help for his symptoms would this be analysed according to these measures.

H. “The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance or medical condition.”

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5 2013: 271), Criterion A can only be met if the exposure to the traumatic event took place in the following ways:

1. “Direct experiencing of the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s).”

Although a PTSD diagnosis cannot be made without meeting what Friedman (2016, online) calls the “stressor criterion” (Criterion A), he notes that clinical experience has shown that “there are individual differences regarding the capacity to cope with catastrophic stress”. This means that most people who are exposed to traumatic events do not develop PTSD. He attributes this to differences in the way individuals experience the world and to the varying filters through which threats are interpreted:

“Like pain, the traumatic experience is filtered through cognitive and emotional processes before it can be appraised as an extreme threat. Because of individual differences in this appraisal process, different people appear to have different trauma thresholds, some more protected from and some more vulnerable to developing clinical symptoms after exposure to extremely stressful situations.”

(Friedman 2016, online)

Although not everyone develops PTSD, it is important to highlight the fact “that events such as rape, torture, genocide, and severe war zone stress are experienced as traumatic events by nearly everyone” (Friedman 2016, online).

2.2.3 Introduction to Trauma Theory

Trauma theory “includes both work around the experience of survivors of the Holocaust and other catastrophic personal and collective experiences and the theoretical and methodological

innovations that might be derived from this work and applied more generally to film and literary studies” (Radstone 2007: 11). This definition is most suited to my research as it also examines the role trauma plays in the arts by applying it to “film and literary studies” (Radstone 2007: 11). Since the 1990s, “cultural trauma theory has been increasingly employed as a theoretical framework for literary practice” (Visser 2011: 270). Within this wider framework of trauma studies, some new fields of study have emerged. One of the most prominent thereof has to do with trauma found in the collective.

2.2.4 *Collective and Cultural Trauma*

I propose that *collective trauma* is prevalent in the white South Africans because of the Border War “event”. The event itself is, however, not the subject of study as the trauma “refers not so much to the traumatic event as to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage” (Visser 2011: 272). The traumatic aftermath, widely studied in the 1980s, was classified as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by The American Psychiatric Association who limited this traumatic experience to the victims of the “event”. This definition has since been expanded not only “to include secondary victims, witnesses and bystanders at the event, but also relatives, therapists and friends of victims” (Visser 2011: 272).

The event in trauma theory, rather than the subject, “emerges as unpredictable or ungovernable” (Radstone 2007: 18). The insights gained by psychoanalysis into the mind’s tendency to symbolisation “enabled the Humanities to develop a model of the subject not as passive ... but as engaged in processes of desire and meaning-making” which has “been central to the development of contemporary understandings of the production, negotiation and mediation of culture” (Radstone 2007: 18).

This collective trauma may be narrowed down further in the context of my research to constitute a *cultural trauma*, as it deals with a cultural group, the white Afrikaner, disillusioned by their nationalist past:

“Cultural trauma refers to an experience of massive disruption and social crisis experienced by a cohesive group of people. Each member of the group need not have directly experienced the cultural trauma and the collective memory of it is shaped over

time and through public representations, such as media depictions and stories that are shared across generations.”

(Waelde 2012: 577)

The definition above refers to cultural trauma as something constructed and deconstructed. This “instability” as reflected in trauma theory is essentially characterized by that which it does not know or cannot remember (Radstone 2007: 20) and “though the subject of trauma theory cannot be restored to coherence through acts of remembrance, a belated acknowledgement of that which has been forgotten is a possibility” (Caruth 1995: 4). This acknowledgement is often done by trauma analysis, which examines texts about personal or collective catastrophe and which attempts to demonstrate the ways such texts can engage with the belated remembrance of trauma (Radstone 2007: 22). Radstone (2007: 24) criticises this analysis in that it relies on the analyst/reader’s authoritative power in the negation of meaning between the various spectators/readers and the text. Contrary to this, trauma theory’s emphasis is on the dialogic nature of testimony. The traumatised individual participates actively in meaning-making. By creating a play that acknowledges that which is forgotten or buried by actively making meaning through text and with artful signifiers on stage, one may help to bridge this gap between trauma theory and trauma analysis.

In contrast to the definition of collective trauma above, the *Encyclopaedia of Trauma* (Gordon & Alpert 2012:489) describes psychological trauma as something that occurs “when the human self-defence system becomes overwhelmed and disorganized”. Trauma generally involves “threats to life, bodily integrity, or psychological integrity; close personal encounters with violence and death; or sudden unexpected disruptions of affiliative bonds and individual frames of reference” (Ibid.). While most people will experience some form of trauma during the course of their lives, the majority will not experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), displaying “resilience” or “the ability to bounce back from negative experiences” (Ibid.: 491). Black’s Medical Dictionary (Marcovitch 2010) describes PTSD as “one of several psychiatric disorders that can develop in people exposed to severe trauma, such as a major physical injury, participation in warfare, assault or rape, or any event in which there is major loss of life or a threat of loss of life”. PTSD is, however, a disorder affecting the individual and his surroundings:

“While individual trauma is always linked to the social sphere, given that social conditions shape the trauma’s impact, traumatic events may affect the discourse of an entire nation’s public narratives. It would be reductive to apply the collective or nation trauma phenomena

common in individuals, such as PTSD with the ... dissociation it may involve. Yet history seems to provide examples of national ‘forgetting’ or displacement that require explanation ...”

(Kaplan 2005: 66)

This national displacement occurs “as a result of a shared catastrophe, which creates a disturbance of the institutional underpinnings of the social order” (Gordon & Alpert 2012:493). Alexander (2004:14) explains that:

“...members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event(s) that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever, and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways...”

The aftermath of such trauma can result in “abrupt changes in the qualities of social relationships, the destabilisation of social life, interference with the predictability of social conduct, and the questioning of social values” (Gordon & Alpert 2012: 493). The same feelings of alienation, isolation, abandonment, and exclusion experienced by the individual in a personal trauma is now experienced by a group. This becomes complex as there may be “an array of different reactions and feelings as a result of the trauma, which do not always constitute a sense of solidarity” (Ibid.) as opposed to an individual’s single reaction. In a country as diverse and as divided as South Africa, this lack of solidarity may be especially problematic. Trauma in the collective implies not only collective remembrance, but it also implies that the collective should agree on the traumatic narrative. Alexander’s (2004: 14) definition of collective trauma emphasizes the effect the trauma has on the future identity of the collective. In South Africa, where, for too long, identity was linked almost exclusively along racial lines with a history of oppression by the minority, the need for critical engagement with traumatic memories is crucial. The rise of apartheid as a reaction to the trauma of British oppression should also serve as a warning to white Afrikaners:

“It is common knowledge that the Afrikaner government that came into power in 1948 was responsible for the introduction of the policy of apartheid, which institutionalised abuse of state power and implemented extreme racial oppression. Yet, ironically, it would be a mistake to read the racial domination thus entrenched as emanating from a group that felt secure in their power. Afrikaners contended with the more powerful forces of the British Empire throughout a history that was experienced as a long and bitter struggle for freedom

from white-on-white over lordship. The self-esteem, indeed the very self-image, of Afrikaner nationhood was forged within a mythology that celebrated the courage of a people who refused to be subordinate to the British Empire on more than one occasion in their history. The rise of extreme Afrikaner nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century is generally understood as a reaction to the defeat of the Boer forces in the South African (Anglo-Boer) War of 1899–1902.”

(Steyn, 2004: 145)

A national (or group) identity was forged in South Africa using the collective trauma and memory – whether real or constructed – of British oppression of the white Afrikaner as the basis for the pursuit of power and the oppression of other groups. Therefore, in any discussion about collective trauma and the white Afrikaner, there should be keen awareness of the very real implications this has had in justifying the unjustifiable.

2.2.5 Intergenerational Trauma

Collective trauma can even be carried over to the children of the victims. This intergenerational trauma fell under the umbrella of collective trauma and was first observed in 1966 by practitioners treating children of Holocaust survivors in Canada, the United States and Israel, who were seeking treatment (Gordon & Alpert 2012: 494). According to Gordon and Alpert, intergenerational trauma is “the transmission of the traumatic experience from one generation to another through verbal or nonverbal communication” which happens when the initial trauma has not been psychologically processed and integrated, or when the trauma is denied, rejected, or not fully acknowledged by society leaving “survivors feel[ing] that they cannot be fully heard and understood (2012:494). Edlmann (2015, online) writes that the majority of the traumatic events experienced by conscripts “remains unspoken or manifests in aggression, particularly when dealing with people, groups and situations they perceive to be a threat in some way”. It is thus clear that the trauma has not been dealt with. This unresolved trauma is then conveyed to the next generation through nonverbal communication because of a socially imposed silence where the survivors’ families and communities do not ask about the traumatic event, and the survivors avoid speaking about their suffering yet simultaneously convey their experience in silence (Gordon & Alpert 2012: 494).

This silence resonates with the view of the Border War as a “Silent War” (Baines 2009: 214). This avoidance of the traumatic subject “often results in the vicarious traumatising of people surrounding the survivor”; thus the next generations of survivors often experience similar trauma symptoms such as survivor’s guilt, anxiety, the fear of annihilation and deep unexplained emotional loss as the victims of the initial trauma would (Gordon & Alpert 2012: 494).

Kaplan (2005: 37) argues that “telling stories about trauma, even though the stories can never actually repeat or represent what happened, may partly achieve a certain ‘working through’ for the victim”. She further notes that this may “permit a kind of empathetic ‘sharing’ that moves us forward, if only by inches” (Kaplan 2005: 37). This is affirmed by Emery (2015, online), who agrees that “once an individual has developed PTSD, the two most effective treatments are antidepressant medication and trauma re-exposure.” This trauma re-exposure he defines as “a form of directive psychotherapy that involves encouraging the victim to recount the trauma and, through gradual re-exposure to the trauma in memory, change his or her emotional reactions in an effort to come to a new understanding of the experience” (Emery 2015, online), echoing Kaplan’s (2005: 37) argument for the “telling of stories”. This is, however, a controversial theory, as will be pointed out in the next subsection.

2.2.6 Questioning Trauma

Although studies on trauma have evolved in the past hundred years to include a more nuanced definition of PTSD in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5 2013: 271) for instance, the field is still evolving, and many scholars question some of its fundamental underpinnings. There are three aspects relevant to my research that are contested in trauma studies. The first being the “unspeakable” and non-linear nature of trauma, which contradicts research and treatments that promote talk-therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). The second aspect, referred to as “cross cultural issues” (Frey 2003: 777) by the medical community, refers to the lack of research done on PTSD outside the Western world. The third and final complication in trauma studies scholars are focusing on, is that of the binary of victim and perpetrator in trauma studies and its implications for interpreting history.

The first aspect of trauma, the fact that it is “unspeakable”, contradicts the commonly held belief that if one “talks through” and “works through” trauma it will lead to healing or recovery. Kaplan and Emery’s arguments for retelling seem to present a linear and clear-cut remedy for trauma

diagnosis. Trauma theoretician and Holocaust scholar, Dori Laub (in Caruth 1995: 63) famously said, “The survivors [of the Holocaust] did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories, they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive.” This antidote to trauma that promises a catharsis to both the speaker and the audience, may however prove problematic after close inspection. Some modern trauma scholars critique this simple anecdote to the complex phenomenon that is the traumatic experience. This scepticism of talk as an antidote to trauma includes advocates of alternative therapies for the treatment of PTSD such as Bessel van der Kolk. Van der Kolk argues that “fundamentally, words can’t integrate the disorganised sensations and action patterns that form the core imprint of the trauma” (Wylie 2004: 34). Postcolonial trauma scholars have also problematised traditional talk therapy as one developed in a Western context that largely excludes more nuanced collective traumas. The subsection on Trauma and Memory will expand on these notions.

Freud’s first publications on hysteria in 1895 claimed that neurotic behaviour stems from a loss which threatens to undo the ego formation or from a traumatic situation with which the subject cannot deal because of shock or helplessness. This ultimately results from too many or conflicting emotions overwhelming the sufferer (Sigmund 2011: 388). In Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1958), the psychiatrist tells of about observing his one-year-old grandson playing a game. The little boy shift[s] the focus of his attention away from the object lost to the time structure involved in dealing with the trauma” (Sigmund 2011: 388). Dominick LaCapra (1999: 701) explains the game as such:

“...the child compensates for the uncontrolled comings and goings of the mother by playing with a bobbin attached to a string that it throws over the side of its crib while uttering the sound ‘ooo’ and retrieving it with the sound ‘aaa’. Sometimes the first gesture (throwing) takes place without the second. Freud interprets the sounds as meaning ‘fort’ and ‘da’ and speculates that the child is substituting the bobbin (which might perhaps be seen as a transitional object, in the words of DW Winnicott) for the mother.”

In this parable “the boy learns to symbolise the mother’s absence, and thus bears it, through a repetitive gesture which gives a sense of mastery.” Both Freud and Lacan agree that the dramatising re-enactment of separation is also “an attempt to conquer its emotional effect” (Van Boheemen-Saaf 2004: 57). This particular narrative is problematic as the emphasis falls on repetition in the “working through” process of the trauma. LaCapra (1999: 702) says that after the

game is autotomized, “one would seem caught up in a melancholic loop that comes close to endless grieving”. This endless grieving is, of course, contrary to a cure-orientated approach to trauma. He even goes so far as to say that the game is a crucial instance of what Clifford Geertz refers to as “deep play” – play that is “quite serious and even a matter of life and death” (LaCapra 1999: 702). If grief and trauma are to be accepted as a repetitive and endless process, any attempts at a cure would be futile. The question then arises whether the relief of the symptoms of a victim’s trauma would not be a healthier approach.

The victims mentioned above have to be identified after the trauma incident. The classification has been at the heart of many debates surrounding discourses on trauma. One of the most well-known debates on victimhood was sparked by Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate, Primo Levi in his book, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1989). In this book, he discusses the role played by Jews in concentration camps to aide Nazi activities in the Sonderkommando. He classifies the participants in this into what he calls the “grey zone”. Levi (1989: 43) writes:

“... the harsher the oppression, the more widespread among the oppressed is the willingness, with all its infinite nuances and motivations, to collaborate: terror, ideological seduction, servile imitation of the victor, myopic desire for any power whatsoever, even though ridiculously circumscribed in space and time, cowardice, and, finally, lucid calculation aimed at eluding the imposed orders and order.”

His text makes contradictory statements regarding victimhood. On the one hand, Levi says that “no one is authorised to judge them, not those who lived through the experience of the Lager²³ and even less those who did not” (1989: 59). On the other hand, he strongly critiques the actions of the Sonderkommando²⁴ when he poses the following questions: “Why did they accept that task? Why didn’t they rebel? Why didn’t they prefer death?” (1989: 58). It would appear that through these contradictions the author is illustrating the complexities surrounding trauma and victimhood which is, in fact, a “grey zone”.

2.2.7 Perpetrator Trauma

²³ “Lager” is a German word Levi uses to refer to the concentration camps. Its literal translation from German is “warehouse”.

²⁴ Sonderkommandos were groups of Jewish prisoners who were forced to work in Nazi concentration camps. These prisoners had to assist with the removal of corpses and the maintenance of gas chambers which aided the Nazi’s in their effort to eliminate the Jews.

The debate about the complexities that arise when trying to define victimhood and culpability is echoed in the discourse surrounding perpetrator trauma. Mohamed (2015: 1) writes that in popular, scholarly and legal discourse, psychological trauma is an experience that belongs to victims. When questioning the psyche of perpetrators, it has largely been to look at what happened in their past that caused their wrongdoings. She says, “We are loath to acknowledge that the commission of the crime itself may cause some perpetrators to experience their own psychological injury and scarring” (Mohamed 2015: 1).

The perpetrator’s role in a collective evil such as apartheid or the holocaust, whether as a bystander or a direct participant of atrocity, is complicated by the fact that these perpetrators do not “primarily act out of personal base motives” (Von Kellenbach 2013: 15), they are merely following orders. In her book on perpetrator guilt and denial, Katharina von Kellenbach (2013: 15) writes: “Traditional law codes define a crime as an individual act that is motivated by personal intentions to fulfil desires such as greed, hatred, or lust.” By contrast, “collective evil ... is where the individual agent from the very start sees himself as acting on behalf of his group, and so genuinely in his capacity as a group member” (Vetlesen 2005: 173). Von Kellenbach (2013: 16) concludes that “collective evil obliterates personal conscience and replaces it with a powerful collective cohesion and corporate identity” which “supplants moral agency and blocks the perception of the humanity, value and personal identity of victims.” Although Von Kellenbach is writing about perpetrators exclusively, the same line of thinking could be applied to most war scenarios. Unless one were to embrace a completely pacifist approach, very few wars can be waged for wholly moral reasons, and even if they were fought on a morally justifiable basis (such as the Allies in the Second World War’s fight against Nazi eugenic ideals), it would be virtually impossible to fight a large scale war without resorting to some measure of immorality.²⁵ All of these factors further complicate the perpetrator/victim binary which frames both individual and collective memories of events.

2.2.8 Trauma and Memory²⁶

Where the categories of victimhood are questioned in trauma studies, the limits of the Western event-orientated trauma definition is questioned by scholars in the field of memory studies. In her

²⁵ e. g. Hiroshima, the Allies’ bombing of German cities filled with civilians. This subject is explored extensively in Martin Zandvliet’s film, *Land of Mine* (2015), which was nominated for a foreign-language Oscar.

²⁶ Also see the section in Chapter 3 on “Mediating Memories”.

analysis of trauma theory and postcolonialism, Visser (2011: 274) critiques Caruth's model of trauma which is characterised by "homogenising and dehistoricising tendencies, which, as several contributors to the *StiN*²⁷ project argue, are at variance with postcolonialist analyses of political and actual historical contexts". Rothberg (2008: 224) writes that the current definition of trauma does not deal with violence that is continually being inflicted on its victims. The traditional model of trauma is connected to a singular traumatic event or experience, and this definition does not include an atmosphere that traumatizes or oppresses. He mentions "sexism, racism, political oppression and the daily fear of persecution and colonialism" as examples of "uneventful forms of trauma not taken into consideration" (Stalpaert 2015: 259). Another critique against its current definition, which is possibly another side of the same coin, is voiced by Dominick LaCapra in his book, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (2004). In this work, he critiques its indiscriminate generalisation "when it misleadingly conflates historical specificity with its Freudian originary notion of trauma" (in Visser 2011: 274). When an originary notion is cast as a trauma, the traumatic experience loses its significance. Visser (2011: 274) thus warns that "thinking about history is a crucial aspect" when trying to come to terms with trauma theory in a postcolonial context.

2.3 Performance

2.3.1 Performing Trauma

It is generally accepted in memory and trauma studies that the key to success in treating trauma lies in narrating the traumatic event, in "acting out" and "working through" it, which adopts Freud's "analytic setting and his psychiatric model of trauma diagnosis, trauma processing and trauma relief" (Stalpaert 2015: 56). This emphasis on the reconstruction of a narrative links with the early ideas propagated in the first wave of research on trauma for which Freud laid the foundation. The recreation of a trauma on stage with a text which frames this event in a specific context echoes the process of an individual undergoing talk-therapy. The audience is not working through this themselves however as the text has already been written. The talk-therapy model also largely relies on the intimate experience of one individual talking to a therapist. A "working

²⁷ "STiN" or *Studies in the Novel* (2008) is an academic journal that had a special issue dedicated to trauma in literature where Visser discussed her article at length.

through” of traumatic events on stage is different in that it involves a collective. The individual is part of a whole: the audience. The fact that the trauma is cast into a narrative – a public process of meaning-making through words and performance – means, however that the trauma is brought from the private into the realm of the spoken. Ika Saal (2010: 356) writes in an article about plays written in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks that “the reconstruction of language is therefore essential not only for the purpose of giving testimony to pain and suffering, but also for healing, for the remaking of the world”, echoing trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra. Caruth (1995: 153) writes that the survivor’s truth “may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension”. Saal (2010: 356) complicates this process of “translating the wound into narratives” in stating that, by doing this, “the trauma loses not only its original force but also its essential incomprehensibility”. Saal (2010: 356) thus questions how one can understand the nature of suffering without eliminating the force of its incommunicability.

2.3.2 *Performing History*

Freddie Rokem (in Stalpaert 2010: 225) writes that “performing history” is characterised by “the time lag between the now of performance and the then of the historical events themselves”. Rebecca Schneider’s seminal text, *Performance remains* (2001), deals with temporality and performance. In it she challenges three notions: firstly, that performance disappears and that text remains; secondly, that live performance is not a recording; and thirdly, that the live takes place in the singular, immediate and vanishing “now”. Schneider later adapted this article to a chapter in her book on re-enactment, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment* (2011) wherein she changed the title to “In the meantime: performance remains”. The ambiguity of Schneider’s title, “remains” – referring both to present and ongoing time, as well as to an aftermath or dead material – provides a key to the perceived dichotomy in performance studies she wishes to challenge. Performance as a vanishing, fleeting or temporary phenomenon has been studied at length in Performance Studies, popularised by Richard Schechner in the 1980s. This limiting notion is skilfully unpacked by Schneider (2011: 98) when she questions and dissects “that which remains” in her article. Whilst the twentieth century is criticising the concept of historical facticity, this has not resulted “in the end of our particular investments in the logic of the archive” (Schneider 2011: 98). Schneider reads Derrida’s archive as “the solidification of value in ontology as retroactively secured in document, object, record” (Schneider 2011: 103). While the emphasis in modernity has largely been on the “preservable” document, even “the earliest known

Greek archive housed mnemonics for performance rather than material originals themselves” (Schneider 2011: 103). The way in which the archive is structured or built also represents the values of the current age and not necessarily that of the period it is trying to represent or “preserve”. Walter Benjamin (1969: 257) famously wrote that “every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably”. The question thus becomes how one escapes this presently-created narrative of history in its representation. Schneider (2011: 43) says that the question for theatre and re-enactment becomes: “How do we ever confidently arbitrate the differences, especially when the frame is less than strictly delineated?” She answers this in a way that seems counter-intuitive at first glance: “The differences or the *lack* of differences between faux and real might not necessarily be failures or threats to the project of accessing, remembering, crossing the path of the past”. This emphasis on the memory as opposed to the “archive” or the historical approach, links to a popular trend in memory studies that questions the historical facticity of representation. Walter Benjamin calls this challenge of linear time “smashing the continuum of history” (in Buck-Morss 2012: 43). Susan Buck-Morss (2012: 43) describes this process as one that “entails violence” as Benjamin uses “militant terminology” and “terrorist metaphors” so that “the dominant historical narrative” may be blasted away and so that “the past ricochets off the present and...historical fragments are the remains of an explosion”. Buck-Morss (2012: 43) writes that after the official memory has been blasted off the fragments of history, these fragments are preserved in images and they “retain the nearness of original experience, and with it, ambiguity”. In this sense, it can be argued that “their meaning is released *only* in a constellation with the present” (Buck-Morss 2012: 43). The images spoken of are of course found in performance. Performance is the only form that can transcend these dead forms of the archive by being live.

2.3.3 *Performing Memory*

Whilst the section above on the performance of history concerns the performance of an event or past, the performance of memory has more to do with the performance of a perceived past. When a memory of a collective trauma is performed, the performance is engaging in either creating, challenging or re-affirming a collective narrative framing of an event. Judith Butler (2004: 4) writes that a collective narrative framing of the event is essential to our experience and understanding of the trauma. She adds, however, that this frame is never innocent or neutral. It is a frame that “enables certain kinds of questions and historical inquiries and precludes others” (Butler 2004: 4). Thus, “in a forceful way, what we can hear, whether a view will be taken as an

explanation or as exoneration, whether we can hear the difference and abide by it” is decided by this frame (Butler 2004: 4–5). This collective narrative frame also determines whether our “experience of violence and loss has to lead straightaway to military violence and retribution” or whether “something can be made of grief besides a cry for war” (Butler 2004: 11). The performance of memories on stage which helps to create this frame, thus carries the ethical burden of framing events in ways that lead to human flourishing and peace without disregarding injustice or historical wrongdoings.

Performance, as mentioned above, has the potential to challenge dominant collective narrative frames of historical events. De Smet et al. (2015: 7) uses the examples of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (William Kentridge 1997) and *De Waarheidscommissie* (Chokri Ben Chikha 2013), both plays which staged the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in a theatrical format, to illustrate how a “performance can dismantle the conditions of the creation of a Truth in a dominant memory regime and [can] inaugurate a profound ethical call for responsibility”. The dangers of performing memory are explored in the section below.

2.3.4 Performing Restorative Nostalgia

The term “restorative nostalgia” I referred to in the first chapter was created by Svetlana Boym (2001) in her landmark book on the subject, *The Future of Nostalgia*. Here she describes nostalgia as a sentiment “of loss and displacement” (Boym 2001: xiii), an “ache of temporal distance” (Ibid.: 44) and also as “a romance with one’s own fantasy” (Ibid.: xiii). Since outbreaks of nostalgia often follow revolutions, it is particularly relevant to studies about remembering the past in post-apartheid South Africa (Ibid.: xiv; Hook 2012: 6).

What makes *The Future of Nostalgia* (Boym 2012) seminal, is its theorization and typology of nostalgia as either restorative or reflective. Boym describes reflective nostalgia as nostalgia about the longing itself, which delays the homecoming²⁸ (Ibid.: xviii). This type of nostalgia is presented ironically and desperately to the audience and thus has a measure of self-awareness. Reflective nostalgia is also aware of its temporal ambiguity as it deals with the contradictions of modernity and its relationship to the past. It is inconclusive in its representation of the past and remains cognizant of “the gap between identity and resemblance” (Ibid.: 49).

²⁸ The first chapter speaks about nostalgia as a longing for a home that has never existed.

In contrast to this self-awareness present in reflective nostalgia, restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia but rather as “truth and tradition” (Ibid.). It protects what it sees as the absolute truth while reflective nostalgia questions this (Ibid.). Restorative nostalgia is primarily about communal identity and national master narratives which grants it a hegemonic character (Boym 2001: 49, Hook 2012: 7). Reflective nostalgia, in turn, moves between the collective and the individual frames of reference. The typology of nostalgia developed by Boym allows one “to distinguish between national memory that is based on a single plot...and social memory, which consists of collective frameworks that mark but do not define the individual memory” (2001: xviii).

Dangers exist on either end of this spectrum of nostalgia. Hook (2012: 7) notes that it is useful to speak in terms of progressive or regressive means of representation in a discussion of nostalgia. He has done extensive research on the documentation of apartheid and its relationship to memory and nostalgia. Another acclaimed scholar in this field, Dlamini, wrote a book that speaks to nostalgia in post-apartheid South Africa which incorporates the typology of nostalgia developed by Boym called *Native Nostalgia* (2008).

Hook (2001) uses passages from *Native Nostalgia* (Dlamini 2008) to formulate an argument that cautions against nostalgia in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. He does this from a psychoanalytic perspective and uses the example of Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom* (2013) as an example of fetishistic nostalgia. This type of nostalgia – like restorative nostalgia – “is necessarily conservative; it represents a reverence towards a protective object” (Hook 2012: 18). The philosopher Slavoj Žižek defines the fetish as “the embodiment of the lie which enables us to sustain the unbearable truth” (2014: 296). Hook makes the case that employing nostalgia acts as a defense formation in remembering the past (Ibid.: 10). It also does not allow for the ambiguities needed in remembering the past. Dlamini writes that, contrary to the struggle narratives perpetuated, “apartheid was not simply black and white, with resisters on one hand and oppressors on the other”²⁹ (2008: 56). This upends the “master narrative of black dispossession that conceals the multiple ethnic, gender and class divisions that run through black communities” (Hook 2012: 10). Hook concludes his article with a warning about the dangers of nostalgia:

²⁹ Dlamini’s book was harshly critiqued by some who branded the author as an apartheid-apologist. Eusebius McKaiser (2009, online) responded to these critics in a review of the book which praised Dlamini’s bravery to confront the uncomfortable parts of history. He also critiqued the rethoric of Dlamini’s critics who missed the author intended ironies and who mistook the views he discussed as his own. See <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/remembering-apartheid-with-fondness>

“Nostalgia...is often, but not solely, a protective device – a way of screening history – that preserves select elements of the past while enabling a structured forgetting of others. A means of strengthening and comforting an ego (be it of individual or group), nostalgia often appears conservative in its ends, aversive to change. If the above arguments are to be credited, nostalgia is, furthermore, adept at neutralizing anxiety and in obscuring (retroactive) patterns of causation that defy the demarcations of past, present and future entailed by linear conceptions of history. ”

The above statement has two main implications for my study. Firstly, I think he is critiquing the dominant master narrative in post-apartheid South Africa that ignores the ambiguities Dlamini (2008: 56) speaks of with regards to victims and perpetrators. The exclusion of Border War veterans from the national master narrative³⁰ can be read as a structured forgetting of an uncomfortable part of history that does not serve the master narrative of black victims and white perpetrators in post-apartheid South Africa. The second part of the quote above speaks to the second implication for my study. The dominant master narrative that white people are now living peacefully amongst their black neighbours and have let go of the racism perpetuated during apartheid is just as exclusionary in terms of representing the past in the present. The master narrative that white South Africans were perpetrators during apartheid and are not anymore – because of a democratic election – has equally dangerous implications. This can be taken further to the analyses of Border War veterans. Whilst the danger of exclusion exists as mentioned above, there exists an equally problematic representation of these veterans as equal to the black victims of apartheid. This means that the conscript is absolved of any wrongdoing which is also a nostalgic view of the past that leaves out bits of history. Although Hook (2012) writes this article in the context of the Apartheid Archive as a mode of remembering and is thus primarily concerned with the representation of the victims of apartheid, a truly nostalgia-free representation of the past and its implications in the present needs to engage with both perpetrators and victims. This by no means implies that perpetrators’ actions should be justified in their representation. On the contrary, their exclusion implies indirectly that they are absolved. Being completely absolved without meaningful engagement is equally problematic in terms of transitional justice and restitution. By representing both victims and perpetrators with nuance, there can be authentic engagement with the past in a way that avoids nostalgia.

2.3.5 *Performing Postcolonial Theatre*

³⁰Deon Opperman (2013, online) repeatedly alleges that an example of this is fallen soldiers’ exclusion from the memorial wall in Freedom Park.

Lo (2002: 35) provides a definition for Postcolonial Theatre:

“While ‘postcolonial theatre’ has sometimes been used as a portmanteau descriptor for performance work expressing any kind of resistance politics, particularly concerning race, class, and/or gender oppression, the term more often refers to a range of theatre texts and practices that have emerged from cultures subjected to Western imperialism.”

This definition would include all South African theatre productions after 1994 even though not all plays specifically deal with themes of a colonial or imperial legacy. Lo (2002: 35) also says that the most well-known postcolonial theatre comes from indigenous peoples in former European colonies, and that some settler theatre is also included in this category. As white Afrikaners are the descendants of colonisers and European immigrants or “settler(s)” (Ibid.), one may still classify South African theatre as postcolonial theatre. Pretorius-Heuchert (1992: 407) argues that the white Afrikaner falls into Fanon’s (1968: 54) classification as a minority:

“Although white South Africans are currently in power³¹, they are numerically a minority and experience their society as being under siege. They certainly have many of the psychological characteristics of a minority group, including the “collective auto destruction”, mentioned by Fanon, as evidenced by the high rates of familicide, alcoholism, suicide and other forms of destroying one’s life. They do not bear the brunt of an oppressive system but do pay a psychological price of constant fear, anxiety, guilt and uncertainty.”

Giliomee (in Kitshoff 2004: 6) believes that the contemporary white Afrikaner³² can be considered as a composite group with a composite culture. This differs from previous generations of white Afrikaners who grew up under the white nationalist government where the boundaries of identity were sharply drawn (Vestergaard 2001: 21). The nationalist Afrikaner identity was based on Calvinism, patriarchy, nationalism, cultural conservatism and whiteness (Ibid.). Van Heerden (2008: 124) refers to this conflict of old and new when he notes that recent theatre productions in

³¹ As mentioned in the note above, this article was written before 1994. Although they are not anymore the dominant political power that they were before 1994, the white Afrikaner still enjoys great economic power and privilege.

³² See the footnote in Chapter 1 on the use of the term ‘white Afrikaner’.

South Africa show theatre makers coming to terms with the new whilst struggling with the baggage of the past. He describes the clear shift in the theatre after apartheid as follows:

“In the field of theatre creation, while certain formal characteristics of the struggle-period theatre remain present and influential, the dismantling of apartheid brought with it the demise of the protest voice (Fleischman 2001) and allowed for other subjectivities and individual stories to enter the theatrical landscape previously dominated solely by the master narratives of colonialism and apartheid.”

Although I would agree with Van Heerden that the “protest voice” has diminished somewhat, I would argue that now, more than ever, South African theatre-makers are grappling with making sense of the far-reaching implications of the master narratives of colonialism and apartheid. The contemporary South African theatre is firmly rooted in the postcolonial setting as it tries to interpret both the past and its implications for the present and future. Even in the case of the theatre of the “ex-coloniser” (the white Afrikaner), the postcolonial impulse to understand the past and to inspire restitution³³ stands central.

2.4 The Border War

Acclaimed military historian, Leopoldt Scholtz (2006: 26), describes the beginning of the Border war in the following passage:

“The war is generally thought to have started on 28 August, 1966 when a force of 130 men – mostly policemen under the command of Commandant (Lieutenant-Colonel) Jan Breytenbach and 9 of his paratroopers from 1 Para Bn – swooped down on the secret SWAPO base of Ongulumbashe in Ovambo with 35 Alouette III helicopters.”

SWAPO’s armed struggle to expel South African colonialists from Namibia was due to decades of humiliation at the hands of white people just as the struggle in South Africa flowed from the white government’s discrimination and violence towards people (Scholtz 2006: 26). Anyone who tried to resist South Africa in Namibia (then South West) was subjected to electric shock treatment

³³ This is, of course, a lofty, admittedly idealistic aim. I think letting the audience examine their position of privilege within contemporary South Africa is important – along with all the nuances that it entails. Restitution is a complex notion better suited to social scientists, economists, philosophers and theologians but I think the playwright should attempt at least to ignite, if not action, debate on these issues.

and imprisonment without trial for months or even years (Groth 1995: 33). SWAPO's fight for independence was fuelled by events such as the public protest against the forced removal of people in Windhoek's Old Location to Katutura in 1959. This led to a police shooting in which 11 people died, and 54 were wounded. SWAPO gained support in their fight for independence from a state that was increasingly perceived as hostile and inhumane (Scholtz 2006: 26).

SWAPO inspired the civilian population to action in 1972, which resulted in multiple national strikes. The police could not cope with internal security as well as with the insurgency of civilians (Scholtz 2006: 27). It was then that the local government decided to turn to the military for help in fighting this war. The South African Defence Force (SADF) was deployed on the 1st April 1974 to Namibian soil (Ibid.)

South Africa first became involved in the Angolan Civil war in 1975 – against its will. Scholtz (1998: 19–20) writes that the government under Prime Minister John Vorster did not want to get sucked into a Vietnam-like morass, like the USA. After pressure from other African states and insistence from the American Ford administration, the South African Defence Force (SADF) gradually became involved. A large Cuban military presence in Angola and the fact that the American congress forced the White House to withdraw their support to the SADF because of South Africa's apartheid policies, resulted in the SADF's decision to withdraw from Angola (Scholtz 1998: 19–20). This perceived "betrayal" by international states informed many decisions made in future concerning military and political strategy.

"This – as it was perceived – political untrustworthiness of America made a deep impact on the South African government and military. Never again, South Africans decided, would they allow their country to get into a situation where, without their own interests being affected, they get involved in another man's war and are ultimately humiliated as the evildoer in front of the whole world."³⁴

(Scholtz 1998: 20)

It is interesting to note that, right from the start of the Border War, the SADF's image is linked to objectionable politics in the international community. The SADF's fight was not only one of blood

³⁴ Trans. "Die – soos dit ervaar is – politieke onbetroubaarheid van Amerika het 'n diep indruk op die Suid-Afrikaanse regering en die Weermag gemaak. Nooit weer, so het die Suid-Afrikaners hulself voorgeneem, sou hulle toelaat dat die land in 'n situasie kom waar hy, sonder dat sy eie belange beslissend geraak word, by 'n ander man se oorlog betrokke raak en uiteindelik voor die hele wêreld as die boosdoener veneder word nie."

and turf but also one of perception and propaganda. The SADF may argue that they were a pawn used by the United States to do its dirty work but it seems this precise tactic of perception was later employed in their strategic defence, and offence, of South-West Africa, what is today known as Namibia. Leopoldt Scholtz (2006) describes the SADF's military strategy in detail in his article, "The Namibian Border War: An appraisal of the South African strategy". This article identifies the SADF's defence strategy as that of guerrilla warfare. This tactic is based on "the basic three-phase model originated by Mao Zedong in the 1930s" (Scholtz 2006: 20). Mao Zedong's "Fish in the water" principle, according to Scholtz (2006: 20), is central to guerrilla warfare. This principle involves getting support from the local population without which "no guerrilla force can ever hope for success" (Scholtz 2006: 20). Zedong (1963: 210) states:

"... (Guerrilla warfare) must fail ... if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, co-operation, and assistance cannot be gained ... [b]ecause guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and co-operation."

In his analysis of who the war's ultimate victors were, Scholtz (2013: 440) is very critical of the SADF's application of this principle. South Africans had naively believed that their investments in the "hearts and mind [of the local population] would pay off". Military Intelligence even reported as late as March 1989 that SWAPO support in Ovamboland had decreased significantly (Scholtz 2013: 440). South Africans were in for a rude awakening when SWAPO won with 92% of the total votes cast in Ovamboland. Scholtz (2006: 29–30) attributes the lack of military intelligence gained from the local population to their problematic relationship with conscripts:

"In order to combat SWAPO, the SADF relied mainly on white conscripts and reservists, often from the cities, who proved to be unsuitable. Being a fair sample of the white community with their paternalistic and even racist attitudes at the time, they were at a disadvantage when dealing with tribal blacks of whom they knew nothing and understood even less. This certainly did not help in getting the loyalty and support of the locals, which meant that the security forces got little or no intelligence, and when they got it, it was mostly too old to be useful."

From the above analysis, one would expect the SADF to have failed in their military endeavours on the border. If one looks at the casualty rate of SADF troops, however, the opposite is true.

Although the numbers have been – and still are – contested, Scholtz (2006: 29–39) compiled the following list of SADF Security Forces losses versus those of SWAPO from various sources:

SADF Security Forces losses versus those of SWAPO

Year	SWAPO losses	Security Forces losses	“Kill ratio”
1966-1974	363	88	4,1:1
1978	971	44	22,1:1
1997 [sic]	915	50	18,3:1
1980	1447	100	14,5:1
1981	1494	61	24,5:1
1982	1280	77	16,6:1
1983	913	96	9,5:1
1984	916	39	23,5:1

(Scholtz 2006: 39)

General Jannie Geldenhuys, leader of the SADF during the war, writes that the “kill ratio” on cross-border operations was 100:1; on cross border operations on southern Angola 30:1; and in Namibia 10:1 (Scholtz 2006: 39). In his analysis of the SADF’s battle statistics, General Geldenhuys (2007: 255) celebrates this “numerical” success of his troops: “When I take everything into account, I can’t help but be proud of the people in the army. Since the Second World War, no one has come close to the powerful ‘kill ratio’ of the SA Army.”³⁵ This analysis of “victory by numbers” is taken further by Hilton Hamann in his much talked about, *Days of the Generals* (2001) which, in contrast to left-wing historians and journalists³⁶, argues that the SADF was directly responsible for South Africa’s (relatively) peaceful transition into a democracy. He argues in this publication that if it were not for the SADF “who kept a lid on everyone” (Hamann 2001: 213), the process of negotiating a settlement and organising a democratic election would have been derailed. He quotes General Georg Meiring, who was in charge of the SADF at the time of South

³⁵ Trans. “Terwyl ek alles so in oënskou neem, kan ek maar nie help om trots te wees op die mense van die Weermag nie. Sedert die Tweede Wêreldoorlog het niemand nog ooit naastenby teen die volle slaankrag van die SA Weermag te staan gekom nie.”

³⁶ e. g. Gary Baines, Robert Gordon.

Africa's first democratic election, to affirm his view of the SADF as a peacekeeper during a time of upheaval: "I warned everyone before the election: If you're going to do something, we'll fuck you up: watch out!"³⁷ This quote is used to substantiate Hamann's view that Meiring actively opposed and disarmed any attempt at a military coup d'état of the state on the part of the SADF. This view was largely contested by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and has been challenged by centrist and more left-leaning historians and journalists. Gary Baines (2012: 84) for instance, criticises the retrospective denial of guilt on these generals' parts when he writes:

"... the climate of reconciliation was undermined by a clique of retired generals who refused to own up to the part played by the SADF ... in the systematic abuse of human rights. These same generals also acted as gatekeepers so that professional soldiers and conscripts were deterred from testifying before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)."

It is clear from Baines' analysis and Geldenhuys' contradicting memoirs that there are major discrepancies in the analysis of the Border War and the generation of men who were conscripted. The process of meaning-making of these events is complex and not uniform. There is clearly a need for engagement with the implications of these events and contesting memories.

2.5 Towards a Master Narrative of Conscription

After apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1998: 257) found that the state's conscription policy was "immoral and denied conscripts the right to freedom of conscience" and refusal. It also found that "the state and the SADF used young men to ... defend the policy of apartheid" and to "maintain the illegal occupation of Namibia. The vilification of conscripts who refused to serve in the SADF by the state and the church (in particular mainstream Afrikaans churches), created "a climate in which gross violations of human rights could take place."

Callister (2007: 113) sums up the SADF's role in apartheid as follows:

"The NP government tended to view the military threat to the nation as something separate from apartheid, while the rest of the world saw it as a result of apartheid. Furthermore, while the SADF saw the ANC and SWAPO as part of the Soviet-sponsored communist

³⁷ Trans. "As julle 'n ding gaan doen gaan ons julle opvok [sic]: julle moet pasop!"

onslaught and thus sought to defend the state against this external attack, to most of the rest of the world the ANC and SWAPO were internal liberation movements looking to create racial equality and social justice. When the SADF opposed them it was therefore accused of opposing their desire for racial equality, and thus upholding apartheid. Whether the SADF was responsible for the perpetuation of apartheid or merely bought politicians time to ensure evolutionary rather than revolutionary reform is open to interpretation, but in either case national service was instrumental in giving the SADF the capacity to perform its duties.”

This view of the SADF as almost an extension or integral part of the apartheid regime is what has cast a shadow over veterans of the Border War and ex-conscripts. Conscripts served in this war under duress and many argue that they were ignorant of the South African government’s political motives³⁸ at the time of their service. This may be a questionable defense however, as there were individual men who took part in the resistance movement to end conscription. In 1983 the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was started as an oppositional organisation to the SADF’s forced conscription practice. Baines (2008: 219) writes that conscripts occasionally “defied the system and joined oppositional organisations such as the End Conscription Campaign (ECC)” or in “rare instances national servicemen even went into exile to join the ranks of the armed wings of the African National Congress (ANC) or Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)”. However, these practices were the exception to the rule:

“By and large, South Africa’s citizen soldiers believed the dominant ideology that held that “terrorists” aided and abetted by communists were threatening to destroy white society in the country.”
(Baines 2008: 219)

The fact that the majority of white men succumbed to this dominant ideology meant that in the aftermath of apartheid, white South Africans were disillusioned and racked with guilt at their role in keeping a corrupt system alive:

“While conscripts may not have been actively fighting for apartheid and while the SADF perceived itself as politically neutral, their presence in uniform was a great bolster to the apartheid state.”

³⁸ The main reason for the war a communicated to troops was that of the communist threat.

(Callister 2007: 112)

The above phenomenon has resulted in significant differences in the framing of the Border War's master narrative. Chris Louw (2014, online) encapsulates the conscripts' moral dilemma about their direct/indirect involvement in maintaining the apartheid regime when he asks: "What remains for me? I am too old to be totally innocent, I am too young to be completely involved, I am too innocent to make apologies, I am too guilty to wash my hands."³⁹

When reading conscripts' accounts of the Border War,⁴⁰ one is struck by the central role morality plays in the retelling of individual experiences. In the majority of the memoirs and personal recollections I read online,⁴¹ I found either the individual's moral justification for their participation in the war or an apology for their participation in this system. Perhaps the text that goes the furthest way towards "objectivity"⁴² by examining purely military facts, is the work done by Leopoldt Scholtz. But even he veers into moral pronouncements when he criticises the liberal media for their vilification of conscripts and the SADF. It would seem that conscription, as a shared "white" experience is one that is often convoluted, whether rightly so or not, with the ideologies of the day in which it took place. It is thus possible that disillusionment with the regime that upheld apartheid is projected onto the experience of the literal period of service to the state. This was for a period one year and was later increased to two years. The end of conscription was announced in 1993.

2.6 Trauma and the Border War

It is this disillusionment, framed almost as a syndrome of a national disease, which is summed up in the famous Boetman letter by Chris Louw (2014, online):

³⁹ Trans. "Wat bly vir my oor? Ek is te oud om heeltemal onskuldig te wees. Ek is te jonk om ten volle aandadig te wees. Ek is te onskuldig om verskonings te versin. Ek is te skuldig om my hande te was."

⁴⁰ Some of these include: *Die Buffels Struikel* (Bothma 2007), *A Battle Scarred* (Feinstein 2011), *An Unpopular War* (Thomson 2006), *Moffie* (Van der Merwe 2006), *Recce* (Stadler 2015).

⁴¹ See Chapter 4.

⁴² I quote this term as I am aware of the role deconstructivism has played in destabilising the notion of objectivity in historical accounts. I have to, however, side with a post-deconstructivist idea of Morality and Truth as both the Nazi and apartheid pasts have established that a moral framework is essential to human flourishing. Without these frameworks relativism can wreak havoc in justifying the unjustifiable.

“A Psychiatrist wrote in a letter to *Beeld*⁴³ that a large part of my generation suffers from spiritual weariness. In many cases it takes the symptoms of psychiatric maladies like depression, PTSD and other anxiety disorders. A general reaction of grief, loss and an existential crisis.”

Baines (2008: 217) also speaks of the Border War’s psycho-social casualties:

“There was no debriefing whatsoever and the soldiers were sent home to resume their lives in Civvy Street. There was little or no treatment for those with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) or what went by the colloquialism *bossies*.”

Apart from the high number of individuals suffering from PTSD (*bomskok*) after the war that were hospitalised, the majority of the men’s trauma only surfaced much later. Academic studies done “on the experience of South African national servicemen have been limited mainly to contributions from the disciplines of psychology and sociology”⁴⁴ (Connell, Omole, Subramaney & Olorunju 2013: 2). There has only been one psychiatric study done on the prevalence of PTSD amongst Border War veterans. Connell et al. (Ibid.) attribute the scarcity of studies “to a significant national amnesia which may be due to the secrecy in which the war was conducted and that these veterans were part of the discredited (apartheid) regime.” This makes it very difficult to quantify the number of veterans suffering from clinically diagnosed PTSD. The study done by Connell et al. consisted of a very small and unreliable group of respondents and warns that its findings should be generalised with extreme caution (2013: 5). Their study found a high level of PTSD (33%) among Border War veterans (Ibid.). The doctors say this rate is consistent with the 30.1% found in the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS) but much lower than the 56% reported for child soldiers in Uganda (Ibid.). Confirming existing international literature on the subject of PTSD among war veterans, the study found that exposure to combat had a lasting negative

⁴³ Trans. “Image”, a popular national Afrikaans newspaper.

⁴⁴ See the following sources for studies specifically about the Border War and trauma in the fields of sociology and psychology:

Negotiating Historical Continuities in Contested Terrain: A narrative-based reflection on the post-apartheid psychosocial legacies of conscription into the South African Defence Force. (Edlmann 2014)

A phenomenological explication of problems with intimacy experienced by the returned conscript as a result of military experiences in the South African Defence Force. (Davey 1988)

“Wishing us away: Challenges facing ex-combatants in the ‘New’ South Africa”. (Gear 2002)

The psychological sequelae of involvement in combat: A preliminary investigation. (Hodgeson 1992)

The relationship between experiences in the South African special forces and current levels of well-being and sense of coherence. (Moorcroft 2007)

Die invloed van militêre diensplig op persoonlikheidsaspekte. (Nel 1983)

“The psychological experiences of white conscripts in the black townships”. (Sandler 1989)

psychological impact on veterans (Ibid.). This study only assessed the prevalence of PTSD in a cohort of conscripts from Parktown High School in Johannesburg, however (Connell et al. 2013: 2). Although the authors claim to assess “their resilience and the relationships between PTSD, resilience and socio-demographic variables” by limiting the study to one school, they severely limit the socio-demographic variables in a group of subjects. For instance, of the respondents, 77% reported having completed a form of tertiary education, which is far above the mean for the general population (Ibid.). This is just one factor which would have a great impact on resilience and quality of life. The authors are modest in their claims and state their hope that the study would raise awareness about the lasting psychological problem of PTSD among former national servicemen, as opposed to claiming their findings could be broadly generalised.

Callister (2007: 116–7) writes of a conscript who says, “‘you have no bad dreams, no regrets, you don’t feel bad about what you are doing or anything regarding that day. That all comes later, years later’”. Connell et al. (2013: 4) confirmed an increase in traumatic symptoms as the men got older. They postulate that the high prevalence rate of PTSD could be attributed to the fact that respondents were in their midlife developmental stage at the time of the study. This aligns with research done in a 20-year longitudinal study of the Lebanon War where veterans noted an increase in post-traumatic symptoms twenty years after the war, which was related to aging and mid-life changes (Ibid.)

“Midlife generally entails some reduction in activity and a shift from planning to reminisce and from occupation with current events to the review and rethinking of one’s life. In the course of this transition, the altered perspective may force the forgotten or suppressed traumatic memories up to the foreground again.”

(Solomon & Mikulincer 2006: 664, cited in Connell et al. 2013: 4)

Connell et al. also suggest that, viewed from an Eriksonian perspective, the later increase in symptoms of PTSD could be because the majority of the respondents were in the stage of identity development when they were exposed to the traumatic events. An Eriksonian perspective would suggest that “at each developmental level the traumatic experience needs to be ‘reworked’ as the cues of the next level of development become prominent.” (Connell et al. 2013: 4) The authors support this by referring to the stream of memoirs written by veterans of the Border War ⁴⁵ in recent years (Ibid.). Only 4% of respondents in the psychiatric study by Connell et al. (Ibid.) had

⁴⁵ See Chapter 3 on Border War literature.

received any medical or psychological interventions before or after their national service. Connell et al. also suggest that the lack of social support (mentioned by Baines above) may have contributed to the high level of PTSD found in their study (2013: 4). They cite an Israeli study that emphasized the role of social support in combatting PTSD (Solomon 1999, abstract) to substantiate this. This 4% who received support from the state is in contrast to the 26% who has since had received counselling at some point after their national service (Connell et al. 2013: 4), supporting the above-mentioned increase in symptoms of PTSD as the veterans became older.

The research done by Connell et al. (Ibid.: 5) correlates with international literature that suggests that the prevalence of PTSD is higher among servicemen who were exposed to direct combat. Below is a table of their findings:

Association between PTSD and Combat Exposure

	Group 1 Special Forces & Minor Field	Group 2 Infantry, Artillery & Armour	Group 3 Non-Field	Total
NORMAL	10 (90.91%)	17 (51.52%)	9 (90%)	36 (66.67%)
PTSD	1 (9.09%)	16 (48.48%)	1 (10%)	18 (33.33%)
Total	11 (20.37%)	33 (61.11%)	10 (18.52%)	54 (100%)

(Connell et al. 2013: 3) ⁴⁶

From this, the researchers suggest that soldiers in Infantry, Artillery and Armour had an 8-times-higher chance of developing PTSD compared to those in the Non-Field group or those in the Special forces & Minor Field group (Ibid.: 4). The authors note that these odds are to be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size of the data collected (Ibid.).

Although “probably 95 percent of all soldiers only ever fired their rifles on a shooting range” (Hamann 2001: 12), the strain of being in the military was considerable. Connell et al. (2013: 4)

⁴⁶ The numbers shown in the special forces group are surprisingly low as these groups were exposed to much more combat situations than other soldiers. This is possibly due to the small sample size used in the study. If these findings are repeated in larger studies, it could lead to a worthwhile research inquiry. Why does a group of soldiers with greater combat exposure have fewer cases of PTSD than its control?

asserts that PTSD “is not linked only to combat exposure, but also to participating in or witnessing atrocities; and to combat training”. Thompson (2006: 109) sketches an insightful picture of the circumstances surrounding the war that led to the prevalence of PTSD and trauma in conscripts, which can be summed up in the following passage:

“Accidental deaths were not altogether uncommon, as could be expected with a proliferation of lethal weapons in the hands of edgy or extremely bored men. Men lost touch with civilian life and developed a new culture, which often lacked respect for other people and property. This was especially the case when men went on patrol and came into contact with the local predominantly Ovambo population, who most soldiers believed were supporting the SWAPO guerrillas in some way, either from compassion or compulsion, and then hiding information about them from the SADF. ‘Werner’, a conscript recounting his experiences in Namibia, talked of houses being set on fire, villagers being beaten, goats stolen, and women being routinely abducted and raped by the local translators attached to his unit, all as part of or as a spin-off from the information gathering exercise. He simply states ‘it is funny what you soon accept as normal’.”

Eyerman (2004: 160) states in his sociological article, “The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory” that a cultural trauma must be understood, explained and made coherent by public reflection and discourse. He further clarifies that in “modern societies, mass-mediated representations play a decisive role” resulting in a “meaning struggle” sometimes called a *trauma drama*. This occurs when mass mediation and collective representation of the collective experience of massive disruption becomes a crisis of meaning and identity.

“As with Vietnam veterans, for a long time after the United States withdrawal from that arena, the narratives of former conscripts who were deployed outside South Africa are still at odds with the process of public memory-making, particularly since they blur the boundaries between heroes and victims and between perpetrator, victim and beneficiary.” (Gibson 2009: 96)

Gary Baines’ afterword in the publication of Anthony Akerman’s *Somewhere on the Border* (2012: 84) reiterates Gibson’s sentiments:

“The veterans’ relative silence in the immediate post-apartheid years was partly encouraged by the vision of the Rainbow Nation, with its inclusionary imperative. It was deemed politically ‘correct’ to emphasize South Africa’s commonalities rather than its conflictual past.”

Anthony Feinstein (2011) writes in his memoir about his time as a medical doctor on the Border while the war was in full swing, that the experience inspired him to become a psychiatrist as the majority of his cases in the war involved mental illness and psychiatric problems. He was eventually assigned to psychiatry as a medical doctor with no background in the field. The classification of all conscripts as suffering from PTSD would, however, be a gross exaggeration and overestimation of the period’s impact. Tucker and Van Niekerk (2009: 48) are very critical of Border War memoirs claiming “victim-status” for all of its participants:

“In regard to the white community in South Africa, focusing the spotlight on PTSD will help in removing the burden of collective guilt that still lies hidden under the skins of every white South African who lived through those years. Ex-SADF soldiers are the survivors and victims of what is now recognised by most people to have been a morally reprehensible war.”

The young men who were called up for mandatory military conscription by the apartheid state were told that they were to fight against SWAPO (the South West African People’s Organisation) and communism (Scholtz 2006: 19). These were forces that by all accounts they were exposed to and which were considered the epitome of evil while the government banned contrary opinions in the media and in the arts.

One is left with a complicated and incredibly diverse cacophony of voices proclaiming what “actually happened”. Aside from the ambiguity surrounding the historical facts and events, great debate exists within the collective as to how these events and facts should be interpreted. As with most significant historical events, the arts and letters are left to interpret the documents. Baines (2008: 224) says these ex-conscripts have created internet sites and “reminisce nostalgically about their time in the army”. He argues that this “(cyber) space” has become the only place “to have their previously discredited voices heard in post-apartheid South Africa” (2008: 224).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the theories relevant to trauma, the Border War and performance to provide the background against which to “interpret and synthesise ... data” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). This has orientated me within the historical and theoretical field I will be writing on. In essence, the discourse surrounding the representation of the past is concerned with a retelling or repetition *a la* Freud’s “Fort/Da” game. This is echoed by Laub (1995: 63), as previously quoted, when he says: “The survivors [of the Holocaust] did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories, they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive”. The centrality of the “telling” places theatre at the heart of any hope for the treatment of trauma. Theatre as a place of representation and serious play provides a space where the reconciliation of the past with the present, or the dead with the “live”, is made possible. It is essential that I keep Visser’s (2011: 274) warning in mind when writing a play that “thinking about history is a crucial aspect” when trying to come to terms with trauma theory in a postcolonial context. The moral and historical implications of the Border War cannot be divorced from the trauma experienced by veterans. The theatre as a space where multiple truths can coexist is one that I feel is especially suitable to explore the nuances that exist when dealing with perpetrator trauma. Failing to acknowledge its existence leave a void for this trauma to be manipulated in such a way that distorts the past to justify dangerous nostalgia in the present.

CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF BORDER DRAMAS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored the theories relevant to trauma, the Border War and performance to provide the background against which to “develop, interpret and synthesise new data or ideas” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). In doing so, Chapter 3 will move further down the iterative cycle. This will include a thematic analysis as an output and a critical account which leads to new ideas. I will firstly aim to contextualise the literary genre known as *Grensliteratuur* (Border Literature). I have chosen to include all plays that were performed professionally. This overview will provide a very basic outline of each play’s conception and plot. Some of these overviews are more extensive than others. Opperman’s plays, for instance, are discussed at greater length in the overviews as they provide a picture of the research inquiry posed in Chapter 1. Plays whose conception are of political significance such as Akerman’s *Somewhere on the Border* (2001) are also expanded on more in the overview. Other plays’ overviews are more limited as they are discussed in depth during the thematic overview. After this, I will critically analyse some of the most prominent themes found in these plays. The thematic analysis will be the structure against which the majority of the text analysis of the plays mentioned in the overview will be interpreted.

In order to create a play about the war, I have to analyse the themes already explored on stage to orientate myself in the “lineage of practice”. I will use this chapter to give a brief overview of related practitioners and precedents in the Border War drama genre (Hamilton and Jaaniste 2009: 5). After this brief overview, I hope to extrapolate themes from these preceding dramas (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). This will enable me to make comparisons with the themes found in social media discourses online in the following chapter.

3.2 Introduction to Border Literature (*Grensliteratuur*) and Border Drama

In his seminal article on Border War literature, “Marginalia on ‘Grensliteratuur’”, Gordon (1991: 92) argues that “... far from being a form of muckraking journalism aimed at undermining the

State or providing valuable insights into the nitty gritty operation of empire, this literary genre can best be seen as a form of confession”. He goes on to argue that it is not a confession of atonement; on the contrary, the genre “... serves in the last analysis to fortify the state and the occupying power, for the destruction it is concerned with is not that of indigenes, of the Other, but of the Afrikaners or the whites, of the Self” (Ibid.). Gordon substantiates this by referring to Hannah Arendt’s theory in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1967) that “... in colonial situations cultural elaborations of frontier violence were essential for the rise of the totalitarian state” (Ibid.). In his article on white conscripts of the SADF who chose to write about their experiences in 2008, *Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation? White Conscripts Reassess the Meaning of the “Border War” in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Baines is quite critical of most of the publications and online writings by these men. He proposes that these veterans have sought to come to terms with the war in four distinct ways:

“... (1) ignoring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) despite its special plea for recognition of their particular circumstances; (2) seeking catharsis by telling and publishing their stories; (3) establishing alternative outlets in cyberspace for their stories; and (4) contesting the official version of the past commemorated by memorials such as Freedom Park.”

(Baines 2008: 7)

The second phenomenon identified by Baines is seen in overviews of Afrikaans literature written during the 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁷ According to Van Huyssteen (1998) the term, *Grensliteratuur* or Border Literature was coined in the following way:

“The term ‘grensliteratuur’ originated in 1984. In her article in the *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* of September 1985 entitled, “Old and New in Afrikaans Prose”, Elize Botha mentions Elsa Joubert who used this term in a lecture for the “*Werkgemeenskap Stellenbosch*”, of the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences on the 15th of May 1984. This term was also used in a press release by Tafelberg Publishers for Strachan’s *’n Wêreld sonder grense*, in 1984. This book was described by Tafelberg as “an important

⁴⁷ See Van Coller (1992), Van Coller (1998), Van Coller (2001) and Van Huyssteen’s (1998) thesis as a comprehensive overview of Border Literature and prose: “Populêre vs. literêre grensverhale: Twee beelde van die Angolese oorlog (1966–1989).”

contribution to the Afrikaans Border literature ('grensliteratuur'), which is especially represented in the prose of today".⁴⁸

Van Huyssteen (1998, Abstract) writes that, in order for works to be classified as Border Literature, "the criterium was that they had to have the South African soldier in South West Africa/Angola as main theme." His dissertation was on prose written about the Border War. However, this definition excludes the majority of women and the rest of the country on the home front. It is possible that the "Border Drama", which I hope will eventually become a recognised term, expands this definition to include and represent all members of society affected by a militarised environment. For this study, I have included all plays which meet the following criteria:

1. The play has the Border War as a central theme or motif.
2. The play has been professionally performed⁴⁹.
3. The play has been reviewed in at least one publication (including online publications).

3.2.1 Border Dramas

Sasha Gear writes in her report for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, that "when the conscription system was finally abolished in 1994⁵⁰, approximately 428 774 white men had, since 1960, reported for military service", citing the TRC's report on this (Vol. 4: 224). She notes that "this accounts for a huge number of the adult white male population, many of whom could therefore appropriately be defined as 'ex-combatants'" (Gear 2006: 18). A generation of these white men thus went through some form of military training or experience. The literature and drama texts that would emerge from this are thus the reaction of this generation to their experience of this period. It is also often a meaning-making process in the aftermath of this experience. Gear (2006: 130–131) writes:

⁴⁸ Trans. "Die term 'grensliteratuur' het in 1984 ontstaan. In haar artikel in *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* van September 1985, getiteld 'Oud en nuut in die Afrikaanse prosa', maak Elize Botha melding van Elsa Joubert wat hierdie term in 'n lesing voor die Werkgemeenskap Stellenbosch van die S.A. Akademie op 15 Mei 1984 gebruik het. Hierdie term is ook in die persberig van Tafelberg Uitgewers saam met Strachan se *'n Wêreld sonder grense* (1984) gebruik. Die boek is deur Tafelberg beskryf as "'n belangwekkende toevoeging tot die Afrikaanse grensliteratuur, wat veral in die kort prosa van vandag tot uiting kom'" (Botha 1985: 229).

⁴⁹ The selection criteria thus excludes plays created at universities for student productions. Opperman's *Môre is 'n lang dag* (1986) was originally written as a student play but was later professionally performed.

⁵⁰ Gear presumably speaks of its implementation but the announcement for this abolishment was made in 1993 as was mentioned in Chapter 2.

“Although the white South African public was (unlike in Vietnam) relatively enthusiastic in its support of government policy, it was fundamentally ignorant of what this translated into. Indeed, a combination of government propaganda and censorship ensured that most details of the war remained hidden from the public. So while the fight against the ‘godless Marxist onslaught’ was for many politically and morally correct, the alienation felt by soldiers returning from combat was immense.”

It is this alienation, and especially disillusionment, that characterises a lot of literature on the Border War. The military experiences of the veterans, however, differ immensely and the landscape of the literature on this reflects these different and often opposing views. The texts written during and after the war also reflect the many revelations the apartheid government concealed and the coming-to-terms of the general public with the state of secrecy they had been living in.

Whilst dramas written during the war mostly critique and question the regime, the plays created after the war are characterised by disillusionment and questions. As will be shown in this chapter, these characteristics are, however, by no means singular or universally held, and they often contradict one another. This representation of a militarised group becomes problematic when the group is also traumatised. This is especially the case when this group’s identity or perceived identity proves to be a threat to the coherence of the greater society. Krüger (2013: 439) describes a scene in *Tree aan!* (2011):

“The drama starts with a school boy that raises the flag of the old regime (the orange, blue and white). He then stands back and salutes the flag. Although this flag has become a symbol of the apartheid regime, this event was permissible within the context of the drama as it reflects the period. However, the audience erupted in applause for this. Whilst the act of raising the old flag may be contextual in itself, through the audience’s interaction it becomes a nostalgic longing for the days of apartheid.”⁵¹

As illustrated above, in the context of a post-apartheid society with the theatre, hopefully, playing a part in reconciliation, the representation of a segregated group of men may do quite the opposite.

⁵¹ Trans. “Die drama begin waar ’n skoolseun die destydse landsvlag (die ‘oranje-blanje-blou’) hys, dan terugstaan en die vlag salueer. Hoewel hierdie vlag vandag ’n simbool vir die apartheidsbestel is, was hierdie gebeurtenis binne die konteks van die drama geoorloof, aangesien dit die tydperk weerspieël. Die gehoor het egter applous gegee hierop. Waar die hys van die vlag op sigself kontekstueel is, word dit deur die gehoorinteraksie ’n nostalgiese terughunkering na die dae van apartheid.”

Robert Gordon (1991: 91) argues this ethical point in his critique of Border literature. He postulates the following:

“... like confession, [Border literature] is a special type of self-stigmata in which the author distances himself from himself and highlights the contradictory aspects of settler and imperial culture being simultaneously a system of social exclusion and social inclusion.”

He further claims that self-stigmata is done to “police the behaviour of subordinate classes while legitimating actions and beliefs among the emergent groups within the ruling classes” (Gordon 1991: 91). Although this article was written in 1991 before the first democratic election, he is retrospectively describing a post-Border War phenomenon. More than 20 years after apartheid, vast class differences still exist, and these differences are often still associated with race. The representation of this “ruling class” (Ibid.) in a society where racial unrest and white supremacy groups are all but buried in the past is thus to be treated with extreme caution and requires careful deliberation.

It is necessary to distinguish between performances with themes and motifs relating to the Border War that were performed during the war in the apartheid era and after the war in the post-apartheid era. This distinction is necessary as my study is about retrospectivity and the vicarious position of Border War veterans in the aftermath of apartheid. It is, however, useful to include a brief overview of what I consider to be some of the most critical work in the genre as it shaped the works created retrospectively. The Border dramas written during the war can also be classified as protest theatre as most of the canonical plays with the Border War as theme were critical of the war and its effects on soldiers and natives. When apartheid ended, however, this protest function evolved into something that can best be described as retrospective dramas. This label is problematic in the sense that many of the Border War’s effects have a very real impact on the present lives of veterans. Plays written about them as subjects, are thus dealing with a past that is reverberating in the present. These plays are thus both retrospective of the past and (hopefully) introspective of that past’s impact on society in the present.

3.3 Border Drama as Protest Theatre

Akerman's drama, *Somewhere on the border* (2012), was written as an extension of Akerman's activities as a member of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). Opperman's *Môre is 'n lang dag* (1986) was written in defiance of the cruelties of the conscription these men had endured or, in Akerman's case, escaped. Both these plays are alive with the vibrancy of immediate action looming at the door. The texts are not retrospective as is the case with plays written after the war, but seek to answer contemporary, immediate questions about the society they find themselves in.

3.3.1 '*Môre is 'n lang dag*' (1986)

In 1984 Professor Francois Swart encouraged Deon Opperman to enter the ATKV's Campus Theatre competition with his text of *Môre is 'n lang dag* (1986). He wrote the text as a student at Rhodes University and was awarded the AA Mutual Vita prize as playwright of the year (Terblanche 2009, online). Albert Maritz says of its debut:

"I saw the performance at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. It was very striking because it was so topical and because it encompassed so much philosophically. No winners. Just to keep on trying."⁵²

(Maritz 2013)

The above mentioned professional performance by Maritz under Marthinus Basson in 1986 was state-funded as it was produced by the old "kunsterade" or Performing Arts Councils. Basson says of his introduction to *Môre is 'n lang dag* (1986):

"I only got involved with the play when I was asked to do it for the old SWARUK (*Kunsteraad van Suid-Wes Afrika*). The text was lovely in that it was life-like for anyone who was in a residence or in the army and the Border War elements (of which I was luckily spared) was not alien or far from our frame of reference. The characters are relatable and the situation is one that is frequently played out in any masculine world. As with a lot of Opperman's works, you will find other dramas that it links with. In this case the Vietnam war drama, *STREAMERS*."⁵³

⁵² Trans. "Ek het die opvoering in die Markteater in Johannesburg gesien. Dit was baie treffend, omdat dit so aktueel en die filosofiese strekking so omvangryk was. Geen wenner. Net aanhou probeer."

⁵³ Trans. "Ek het eers daarmee te doen gekry toe ek gevra is om die werk op te voer deur die destydse SWARUK (die Uitvoerende Kunsteraad van Suid-Wes Afrika). Die teks was heerlik lewensgetrou vir enigiemand wat in die koshuis of Weermag was en die grensoorlogelemente (wat my goddank gespaar is) was nie vreemd of ver van ons verwysingswêreld nie. Die karakters is herkenbaar en die situasie speel hom maar gereeld uit

(Basson 2013)

Basson's production included a multi-racial cast even though the text implies that the characters are all white. He says it was exciting performing the play in "the old South-West Africa ... because it was just before independence and we could do it with a cast of white, coloured and black actors which gave the production another layer of racial tension"⁵⁴ (Basson 2013). Interestingly, the Performing Arts councils allowed this play to be performed even though the system was viewed by some as an extension of the state – which at that time would have propagated the war. The fact that the play was accepted and performed is a possible testament to the universality of its themes and credibility of its characters. Whilst Opperman certainly makes a defiant statement about the Border, the multi-dimensionality of his characters overshadow these political ideas so as not to seem "on the nose".

Môre is 'n lang dag illustrates the futility and destructive effect of the Border War at the hand of five characters: Christo, Neil, Van, Lappies and Kosie. The play's plot revolves around the fact that their co-conscript had been injured before the play starts. Willie's destruction is quite literal as the characters find out in the middle of the drama that he had died from these injuries. This happens as a result of the other soldiers' inability to guard him. This "impotence" of the male figure to fulfil his traditional patriarchal role as the protector of "his own" is illustrated repeatedly. It is particularly apparent in the characterisation of the main antagonist, Lappies, who is full of talk but who lacks integrity. These morally ambiguous characters are portrayed as naive boys. This is juxtaposed against the State's patriotic imagination of them as national heroes. Their impaired masculinity – in the stereotypical sense of the word – as well as the changing values of a new generation, is uncovered in the drama. One of Opperman's popular themes is explorations of complexities surrounding the father-son relationship.⁵⁵ The traditional patriarch is denounced by the young characters:

"Neil: He's a bastard.
Christo: He's your father.

in enige manswêreld. Soos menige van Opperman se werk sal jy wel stukke kry waarby dit aansluit. In hierdie geval die Vietnam-oorlog stuk, STREAMERS."

⁵⁴ Trans. "destydse Suid-Wes Afrika ... want dit was kort voor onafhanklikheid en ons kon dit doen met 'n rolverdeling van Wit, Bruin en Swart spelers wat die produksie 'n verdere laag van rassspanning kon gee."

⁵⁵ See *Die Teken* (Opperman 1986), *Stille nag* (Opperman 2004), *Donkerland* (Opperman 2004), *Boesman, my Seun* (Opperman 2004), for examples of his exploration of the father-son relationship.

Neil: What's the difference between him and a terr? I'll tell you. He gave me far more grief and I hated him a thousand times more."
(Opperman 1986: 14)

When the boys speak ill of their fathers, they are in a sense doing away with the values and religious values of their fathers. The Biblical command to honour and revere authority and one's parents is disregarded. This links with another recurring theme in Opperman's oeuvre: his strong critique on the rigidity of religion.

"I believe there are three things that make you human: nature, nurture and something unique you bring with you when you're born. Something that only you have. A part of what makes me unique is my deep mistrust of any rigid or organised religious structure. As a child I asked my father why we had to give money to the church and why this man we knew went to church but didn't do what the Bible said. Even then I saw the double standards."⁵⁶
(Terblanche 2009, online).

To a large extent, religion was associated with the ideals upheld by the old regime in South Africa to justify the atrocities of apartheid. Opperman's other works deliver harsh critiques on these religious institutions' exploitation of the masses.⁵⁷

"Neil: (...) We are not any better than them. Killing is killing. Torture is torture, and whether you do it in the name of God or in the name of freedom, there is no difference. So do not come to me with 'plig'. I do not owe anybody anything. Not Willie, not this country, not God."
(Opperman 1986: 24)

The aggression that accompanies disillusionment and a revelation of the gross realities of the old regime cause for strong defiance against that previously unquestioned norms. The characters' long periods of waiting for action to take place in *Môre is 'n lang dag* is harnessed in a Beckett-esque

⁵⁶ Trans. "Ek glo daar's drie dinge wat 'n mens mens maak. Oorerwing, omgewing, en die unieke iets wat jy saam met jou aarde toe bring. Wat net jy het. Deel van wat my uniek maak, is 'n wantroue van enige rigiede of georganiseerde geloofstruktuur. Ek het as kind al vir my pa gevra hoekom moet ons geld vir die kerk gee, en hoekom gaan hierdie oom kerk toe, maar doen nie wat die Bybel sê nie. Toe al het ek die dubbele standaarde opgelet."

⁵⁷ See *Die Teken* (Opperman 1986) and *Magspel* (Opperman 2004) for examples of his exploration of religious themes.

manner to illustrate the absurdity of war (Coetser 2006: 186). *Môre is 'n lang dag* may be interpreted as a metaphor for white Afrikaners' thought. The illogical crimes of the apartheid era are justified by the hope that tomorrow or the afterlife will be rose-coloured, heavenly. The national church as a proponent of this unjust system is cleverly brought into question by referencing the absurdist movement – synonymous with the philosophical works of Sartre, which critiqued the perceived escapism associated with the religious. The absurdist theme of waiting, the aimless anticipation of the arrival of something/someone that may never come, as in *Waiting for Godot*, is one that Opperman uses to question the religious rhetoric underlying the apartheid system.

Marthinus Basson says that, aside from “masculine behaviour which is always interesting”⁵⁸ in *Môre is 'n lang dag*, he does not think “the work is of much value today as a debate”⁵⁹ (Basson 2013). When asked about its (re)performance post-apartheid, post-Border War, he once again dismisses the play as made somewhat irrelevant by the changed political climate.

“I would think that in light of the changes that took place in our country, it is not something that can lead to new insights or to the renegotiation of the realities of the specific period it is set in, for this purpose the play falls short. At most a memorial piece with some actable parts and a few acting challenges.”⁶⁰

(Basson 2013)

By measuring the value of the play in terms of its contribution to contemporary debate, Basson is possibly implying that it lacks ambiguity, a common characteristic common in “Theatre of War” (Hulse 1985). After the war has ended, the protest nature of the play's *content* tends to be more important than the aesthetical *form* or its poetic voice. Its universality is thus brought into question. This question of universality also hints at the possible danger of exclusivity in that the play is only commemorating/retelling “white” stories. It is interesting to note how Kannemeyer (2005: 680–681) phrases the play's plot:

⁵⁸ Trans. “... mangedrag wat altyd interessant is...”

⁵⁹ Trans. “... dink ek nie die stuk het veel waarde as debat vandag nie.”

⁶⁰ Trans. “Ek sou dink dat dit in die lig van die verandering in ons land nie regtig iets kan bydra tot nuwe insigte of bereddering van die realiteite van sy tyd nie, daarvoor is die stuk en die vrae wat dit belig hopeloos te lig in die broek. Hoogstens 'n herrinneringstuk met sekere speelbare rolle en 'n paar akteursuitdagings.”

“A play about five white conscripts in a tent somewhere on the border that represent the diverse political views, languages and differences in personality and civilisation of South Africans.”⁶¹

White males portrayed as representative of all South Africans may be partly why the play was criticised as being exclusive. It is interesting to note that Deon Opperman’s reworking of the play into a musical in the State Theatre, *Tree Aan!*, included non-white characters along with the main characters found in the original *Môre is ’n lang dag*. Opperman says of this that he only later realised the impact the Border War had on black South African victims and that his relationship with a black man in his military camp lead to his inclusion of the character (Opperman, *Boektent*, Woordfees 2013).

3.3.2 ‘Die Spinner’ (Leach 1985)

Die Spinner was first performed on 4 July 1983 in the Pretoria State Theatre. The author, C.P. Leach also directed and designed this production. The three characters of the play – the puppet master, Jan and Anonymous – are all played by one actor. This one-man show is a short play that was performed alongside other short plays at various theatres in South Africa. The title refers to someone spinning around, which represents the light-headedness and confusion of the main character and links with the theme of mental illness explored in the play.

The play starts with the character of Jan being manipulated by the puppet master. The lights adjust to indicate the interior of a mental institution. The character, Jan, is a veteran who is now dealing with the demons of his past war experience in a psychiatric care facility.⁶² The individual conscript, Jan, is shown to be at the mercy of the puppet master or “the system”. The puppet master speaks only at the start and the end of the play. The metatheatrical device is effective in that it manages to alienate the audience in the Brechtian sense by making them aware of the theatrical space which affords a measure of distance and objectivity from the character’s emotional experiences. The play breaks away from the conventions of realism and breaks the fourth wall through the puppet master’s direct address of the audience. This convention is especially effective in confronting the

⁶¹ Trans. “’n Spel oor vyf blanke dienspligtiges wat in ’n tent êrens op die grens die uiteenlopende politieke oortuigings, tale en verskille in persoonlikheid en beskawingspeil van die Suid-Afrikaners verteenwoordig.”

⁶² The theme of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as an after effect of the war will be discussed in the thematic analysis of the plays.

political by creating a very concrete metaphor for the state's effect on the conscript. The individual is a puppet at their command.

The narrative jumps between Jan's experiences on the Border (presumably in the past) and his experiences in the psychiatric facility (presumably in the present). The narrative and style is poetic and non-linear. Leach (1985: 72) writes in its introduction that the play consists of fragments:

"I present here a collection of fragments as a psychological case. The '*Erblenis*' of the individual as a mirror of the time."⁶³

The individual, the character of Jan, is sketched as a kind of everyman with little to distinguish him from other soldiers. This is possibly an allusion to the lack of individuality in war and the similar fate of many soldiers in the Border War. The character's name, Jan, also hints at this lack of individualism as the Afrikaans equivalent of an everyman is "Jan Alleman".⁶⁴ The other characters' names are also metaphorical: Puppet Master and Anonymous. By turning these characters into symbols, the playwright makes the play about more than an individual's experience of the Border War: By using symbols to represent the Border War, he is able to give a broader view of the political metanarrative. These symbols are without specific traits, however, and this again feeds into the war theme of the conscript being a G.I. Joe, without a distinctive identity. The character of Jan speaks about the Border as a place where he loses his identity:

"In the quiet before contact I slip through the bushes and the grass
All around me the others are moving too
They are a part of me
I forget who I am
My name
Number 47236367BG"⁶⁵
(Leach 1985: 77)

⁶³ Trans. "Ek bied hier 'n versameling geïntegreerde fragmente as 'n psigologiese saak. Die '*Erblenis*' van 'n individu as spieël van die tyd."

⁶⁴ Trans. "Jan everyman"

⁶⁵ Trans. "In die stilte voor die kontak sluip ek deur die bosse en die gras
om my beweeg ander ook
hulle is deel van my
ek vergeet wie ek is
my naam
nommer 47236367BG"

This is echoed in another passage where Jan says that those fighting on the Border have forgotten who they are and what they were taught:

“Many things they were taught long ago
 They cannot remember
 Sometimes they can’t even remember their own names ...”⁶⁶
 (Leach 1985: 77)

Throughout the play, there is a clear distinction between who the veterans were before and after the war. As the passage above suggests, their identity has been irrevocably changed by their experiences on the Border. The climax of the text, to my mind, is Jan’s revelation that he witnessed the rape of the corpse of a local woman by his lieutenant after an attack on a black village. After this, either he or his co-conscrip, Swanepoel, shoots and kills the lieutenant who raped the corpse. Jan is uncertain about who pulled the trigger to kill Swanepoel. This possibly points to the disgust felt by many conscripts about the treatment of local people in the Border areas. In some ways, the play makes a case for those conscripts who refused to take part in these acts but who nonetheless went to serve in the Border War. This violent rape and murder are then juxtaposed by his return home where he has a violent sexual encounter⁶⁷ with his wife. The trauma is thus not limited to the Border. The soldier clearly brings the Border back home. These and other themes will be expanded on in the thematic analysis. In giving an overview of the play, however, it is essential to note the significance of the play as it is the one that speaks most directly about the PTSD experienced by veterans returning from the war. The fact that large parts of the play are set in a mental health facility where little or no understanding and effective treatment exists, makes this theme visceral and concrete, whereas the other plays only include PTSD as a part of the veteran’s experience. It also addresses perpetrator trauma directly by questioning the culpability of the bystander. The conscript’s trauma is caused not only by his witness of trauma, as was discussed in Chapter 2 on the criteria for the diagnosis of PTSD, but also as a result of his guilt over his part in the atrocities witnessed. The degree to which the veteran could be held accountable for his part in

⁶⁶ Trans. “...baie dinge wat lank gelede vir hulle geleer is
 kan hulle nie meer onthou nie
 partymaal kan hulle nie eens hulle name onthou nie ...”

⁶⁷ The description of the event in the play borders on marital rape. This will be expanded on in the thematic analysis that deals with the female perspective later on in the chapter.

the war is also commented on by the fact that a puppet master, as a metaphor for the state's power and manipulative nature, both starts and ends the show:

“The puppet master lifts his arms into the air
the lifeless heap – wood, wire and material –
moves and takes shape
the marionette lives”⁶⁸
(Leach 1985: 73)

The veteran only starts living and moving when the puppet master decides. He (Jan) is at his mercy. Although *Die Spinner* (Leach 1985) is a very short text, it manages to explore some of the toughest questions regarding culpability and perpetrator trauma and the ambiguities left in the wake of the Border War.

3.3.3 ‘Somewhere on the border’ (Akerman 2012)

Anthony Akerman's play was first performed in 1983 in The Hague, Netherlands, where Akerman lived in exile. The play is about five young conscripts serving under bombardier Kotze who have to contend with the realities of fighting an unjust war. The other character in the play is simply called “Black Actor”, a local man enlisted in the SADF and who later portrays a terrorist. The black character, whom the conscripts call John, is humiliated throughout the play. Near the end of the play, one of the conscripts, David Levitt, is killed during battle under SWAPO fire. This evolves into Doug Campbell, a liberal anti-war conscript, having to shoot the wounded SWAPO soldier (played by the “black actor”) who was responsible for his friend's death. In having to make the choice about whether to shoot this soldier or not, the character has to choose whether to stand by his just political convictions or whether to protect “his own”. The final words uttered in the play belong to the cruel and racist bombardier, Kotze, who tells Campbell, “It's you or him, Campbell. It's always been.” (Akerman 2012: 81). The play shows how an individual's noble political intentions to oppose the war were in many ways doomed to fail against a more powerful system: the state. Campbell represents, in many ways, the minority of soldiers who actively opposed conscription.

⁶⁸ Trans. “Die poppemeester lig sy arms op
die lewelose hoop sehoout, draad en materiaal atbeweeg en kry gestalte
die marionet lewe”

It was banned by the South African government that same year after Akerman had sent a private copy of the text to his friend, playwright, Athol Fugard, who at that stage was still living in South Africa. The first production in The Hague was performed appropriately on Armistice Day as Akerman was actively involved in anti-apartheid activism at the time. He was granted asylum in the Netherlands as a conscientious objector. Akerman's (2012: xvi) fascinating introduction to the text of the play tells how its first production was even infiltrated by a government spy, Johnny:

"The play opened with a South African cast ... even my stage manager, Johnny, was a South-African who had been given asylum as a war-resister. He was from a conservative Afrikaans background and had had trouble in childhood much of which had been spent in the Tokai Reformatory. He went AWOL [absent without official leave] in the army, was caught by the military police, slashed his wrists, was stitched up and sent to detention barracks for a month. Johnny did the lighting and I did the sound and we sat next to each other in the box each performance. He connected with the character of Paul Marais and I watched him holding back his tears every night in the final scene. In 1999 I was told he'd been a spy. In and out of DB [detention barracks], he went AWOL again, living below the radar as many people did avoiding conscription. His girlfriend was a friend of Lisa Williamson, spy boss Craig Williamson's sister. She offered to wipe the slate clean if he worked for the security police, so he was sent to the Netherlands to apply for political asylum as a war resister and infiltrate their movement."

Johnny later wrote to Akerman, apologising for the role he may have played in the play being censored:

"So yes, I was employed by the S.A. police at the time of *Somewhere on the Border*. I can't say anything with certainty, but I doubt if anything I reported at that time could have had much influence. I didn't report anything that wouldn't have been in the Dutch media long before, and I didn't really have time for anything but the play at the time. If my role played any part in any of the difficulties you had with the S.A Embassy, I'm deeply sorry."
(Akerman 2012: xvi)

Akerman writes in his play's preface that Johnny currently lives in Amsterdam and that they are Facebook friends. In 1986, the play was performed by Deon Opperman during his residency at

PACOFs, the Orange Free State's Art Council, despite the fact that the play had been banned. Opperman had exchanged "army plays" (Akerman 2012: xix) with Akerman a few years prior to this. After a performance in 1987, André Lombard (who played Marais in the play) was attacked by six men. The Hiemstra Commission later (1990) revealed that a special military unit had been put together that functioned in 1986–1987, tasked with intimidating opponents of the government. One of the members of this unit testified that "a decision was taken to assault an actor in order to stop performances of a play in which the army was presented in a bad light" (Akerman 2012: xxi).

Akerman says that although he wrote the play as protest he had never seen any "stylistic similarity to what, in the 1980s, was loosely called protest theatre" (Akerman 2012: xxvii). A large part of his motivation for writing and performing the play had to do with his political beliefs and ideas. Michael Smith, one of the organisers of the Committee on South African War Resistance, planted the seed that would lead to his creation of the play by asking Akerman to write a play for their cause. Although Akerman sees his play as different from Barney Simon's brand of protest theatre⁶⁹, he admits to his play's function being that of protest:

"It is a character-driven drama in the realist tradition. But the explosive subject matter, the banning of the script, the confiscation by the military police of the actors' uniforms, bomb scares and actors being attacked by a hit squad would all have contributed to its being perceived as a so-called protest play. At the time it was one of the voices raised against the brutalisation of the South African military and I'm still proud of that."

(Akerman 2012: xxvii)

This description fits neatly into the view that plays written during the apartheid years about the politics of the day, were largely that of protest against the regime. Considering the events surrounding the play's production, the play's creation and subsequent performance was a most defiant political act.

⁶⁹ Simon's plays, created at the Market Theatre which frequently starred the likes of John Kani, were characterised by a Poor Theatre aesthetic that emphasised the actor's body being used in ways that depart from the realist tradition. This was also done for pragmatic reasons as actors often had to stop performances when the township police would raid or patrol the area. Elaborate sets and costuming was thus not an option. *Woza Albert!* (1980) ushered in this brand of theatre:

"The play is significant in South African theatre history, both in form and content. It is constructed in a recognisably African episodic mode, which is suggestive rather than realistic. This reduces the necessity of a specific theatrical space, elaborate props or sets. The presentation is evocative rather than realistic as the two performers present many recognisable figures of South African Apartheid society."

(Hutchinson 1999: 221)

Akerman (2012: xi) describes the backbone of the plot as the story of how “Campbell, a young man who rejects racism and the military, surrenders territory inch by inch in order to survive and ultimately betrays everything he believes in, including himself.” At the start of the play, Campbell is painted as a young white liberal. He tells his fellow soldier that when call up came, he “put in a no show” (Ibid: 16). In contrast to his hellish bombardier, Kotze, Campbell rejects racism. He describes his time of “living under the radar” whilst avoiding conscription to Levitt in the following idealistic terms:

“It was a radical buzz. I had no bread, didn’t graft, just lived off the land. Hey, I could really dig the beauty of the country. I tell you what, the energy out there is unreal. Some of the most amazing cats I met were black. Like I could really get into their philosophy of life. Hey, this one Cat, Amos! We’d just bust a bottleneck together. The sun was like setting and we were taking hits, and then I dot this full-on rush. This is Africa! Like we were so close and digging each other’s company, the future could have started then.”

(Akerman 2012: 16)

This short monologue does a lot for the character’s exposition as it reveals not only his politics but also the values and the subculture to which he subscribes. This English liberal soldier, reluctant to serve as a conscript, is one that resonates with the rhetoric of the End Conscription Campaign with its famous slogan: “I am terrified of what I will be forced to become for my country” (Drewett 2008: 109). Gary Baines (2004: 1) writes in the introduction of an article, which borrowed its name from a tagline used by the End Conscription Campaign that, “The ECC provided a support network for those (white) conscripts who objected to the call-up on conscientious or religious grounds”. One of the ECC’s central goals was “to make the general public aware that the lives of the country’s young men were being sacrificed in support of the apartheid regime” (Baines 2004: 1). This organisation is particularly interesting when one examines the role of the arts in politics. It was a “very vibrant organisation which made use of many innovative and creative means of protest” (Drewett 2003: 81). Drewett (Ibid.) writes on the role music played in the dismantling of the apartheid regime through the ECC:

“The ECC very effectively mustered the support of many musicians who were not active members of the ECC, but who supported the call to end conscription or stop the apartheid

war. This not only strengthened the ECC's profile, but also added to the sense of political and cultural movement which the end conscription issue became."

Akerman's play would definitely have strengthened the ECC's sentiment of pacifism as it highlights the gruesome realities of war.

3.4 Border Drama as Performances of Memory

As the apartheid era came to an end and South Africa had transitioned (mostly) peacefully into a democracy, the function of Border dramas as protest, was replaced with performances that functioned retrospectively. In the aftermath of Chris Louw's famous *Boetman* letter, the plays on stage reflected many of the themes Louw wrestled with in coming to terms with the disillusionment of having sacrificed everything for an ungrateful and essentially villainised system. Hauptfleisch (2016, online) explains this letter and the play of the same name, *Boetman is die bliksem in!* (Fourie 2017): "Essentially an older generation of Afrikaner leaders was accused of misleading a younger generation of Afrikaner males into fighting and dying for the despicable cause of apartheid".

When writing plays about the Border War, dramatists are thus creators of a form of historical fiction. In her analysis of novels written in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer war, Gerda Taljaard-Gilson (2013) writes that historical fiction is written for the following purposes:

- the creation of a historical consciousness to make sense of current affairs
- the confirmation of an (Afrikaner) identity
- the historical novel as a form of "therapy" and penance
- the exposure of manipulated facts and suppressed history
- the historical novel as a "memory museum".

It is worthwhile to keep these objectives in mind whilst examining Border dramas as performances of memory. The purposes mentioned above can be seen as possible prompts that led to the questions posed by the authors and performers.

3.4.1 'White men with weapons' (Coetzee 2001) and 'Johnny Boskak is feeling funny' (Coetzee 2009)

White Men with Weapons by Greig Coetzee (2001) is a one-man show about “being white, male and in the army in South Africa” (Hauptfleisch 2016, online). The play is set in 1990 in a SADF training hall in Oudtshoorn. The play consists of a series of monologues by different characters all performed by one actor. These characters include Captain Marais (the social worker), the sergeant, the Colonel, Cedric Cobb (the priest who is angry at God), the *Korporaal*, the soldier on a pass, Ruhr Labuschagne, the Major, Rocco (the racist farmer), the rifleman, Roker (the dopehead medic) and private G. Coetzee. The fact that the play both opens and ends off with the writer and performer as a character in the army himself gives the play a sense of authenticity. The fact that Coetzee writes himself in as an observer of these characters gives the play a confessional tone. The characters are not overtly linked to each other, and there is no direct through-line, but the range of monologues gives the audience a live documentation of the dynamics and characters present in an army camp.

Johnny Boskak is feeling funny (2009) was written by Greig Coetzee as a “spin-off” (Stones 2016, online) of *White Men with Weapons* (2001). The play was performed by Craig Morris and directed by Roslyn Wood-Morris. Also a one-man show, Johnny is a “misfit from the army, who went in at 17 and was spat out years later so warped it’s a surprise he can stand at all” (Stones 2016, online). This play has a more traditional narrative arc and draws on elements of the “road movie”. It tells the story of Johnny who makes a road trip across South Africa and falls in love on the way with a femme fatale. Coetzee uses the South African landscape to explore the main character’s identity as a veteran of the SADF in a democratic South Africa. The play is written entirely in rhyming couplets and the rhythmic elements of the text are used to underscore the physicality that forms part of this performance.

The play won the prestigious Golden Ovation award at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 2015 and the review in the festival’s newspaper, *Cue*, reads as follows:

“A spectacular one man-show that tells of the experiences of a displaced white man in South Africa, who is on the run with his lover. Crude sexual humour juxtaposed with biblical allusions attempt to articulate the disillusionment of living in a post-apartheid society. Be prepared to experience the underbelly of the ‘new’ South Africa.”
(Nuen 2015, online)

Throughout the play, Johnny also encounters different characters on his journey across South Africa as he tries to catch a lift by hitchhiking with strangers. This mode of transport has particular relevance to the culture that surrounded conscripts of the apartheid era:

“In what might be a uniquely South African irony, hitching, that ultimate symbol of freedom, was a state-sanctioned mode of travel for conscripts in the SADF. There were even lay-byes specially constructed for the okes⁷⁰ in brown burdenned with their *bal sak*,⁷¹ with signs and everything. Yet despite, or because of, the chances of being rapidly picked up by a patriotic *boer*, troepe swopped their browns for their denims as soon as the army base was out of sight, preferring a longer wait on the side of the road than having that hated uniform hanging off them for a moment longer than necessary.”

(Kretzmann 2015, online)

This association is one that illustrates Johnny’s past manifesting in his present. It is as if he cannot escape the memories of his army past whilst struggling to cope with the irrelevance of his identity as a white man in the present. According to Taljaard-Gilson’s (2013: 384–5) classification of the purposes for which historical fiction is written, Coetzee’s plays fall into the category of “the creation of a historical consciousness to make sense of current affairs”. This exploration of the past as an explanation for a character’s present formation is seen especially in *Johnny Boskak is feeling funny* (2009). The purpose of historical fiction, “the confirmation of an identity”, is to a certain extent subverted in his plays. Identity is portrayed as something fluid and unfixed. This notion of being unfixed in his identity is symbolized in the drifter character that is Johnny. Part of the play’s description is that he is either dinosaur or white trash. Johnny confronts this directly near the beginning of the play:

Johnny, you’re a disgrace to the Rainbow nation,
You were on the side of perpetration,
The fact of your situation
Is that you’re a white trash apartheid abomination.
(Coetzee 2009: 9–10)

⁷⁰ South African slang for “guys”.

⁷¹ Afrikaans word for “balls sack”, this was a crass word used to describe the tube-shaped army duffel bags issued to conscripts.

His status in post-apartheid South Africa is not secure. He roams the national roads trying to find purpose and meaning. He does not have a home to which to return. In a particularly striking scene, Johnny falls asleep and starts dreaming about trying to get through the pearly gates. After being rejected by God, the devil “tunes” him:

From now on you're one of the damned
 Damned by the blood on your hands
 Damned to wander across this land
 (Coetzee 2009: 10)

The section above casts Johnny as a sinner who is stuck in the South African landscape as a kind of purgatory. The veteran as permanent drifter is also alluded to in the crude title.⁷² As a hitchhiking soldier, he would still have had a purpose and would have been a respected member of society who had a home to return to. As a homeless drifter, he has been reduced to undignified habits – Johnny Boskak. Sassen (2015, online) writes in her review that the play touches on “the horror that white young men were compelled to face in the South African army, which was mandatory for them under the apartheid regime” and portrays “the unique culture which surrounded the South African apartheid army and seriously damaged so many white South Africans”. Even though the play deals with the Border War less directly than its predecessor, *White Men with Weapons* (2001), Coetzee still illustrates the ramifications of the past in individuals’ present contexts.

3.4.2 ‘*Boetman is die bliksem in!*’ (Fourie 2017)

As discussed in the first chapter, Louw’s famous letter, “Boetman is die Bliksem in”, expressed the frustrations of middle-aged white men, who felt the old National Party’s patriarchs had betrayed them by sending them to fight in an unwinnable war (Keppler 2009, online). In the aftermath of Louw’s letter, newspapers were flooded with reactions from the public who responded with open letters in newspapers. *Boetman is die bliksem in!* (2017) was written in the aftermath of Louw’s open letter of the same name to Willem de Klerk⁷³. *Boetman is die bliksem in!* (2017) was created by Pieter Fourie as a docu-drama using letters printed in the columns of the different newspapers, transcriptions of interviews and other material gathered in connection to the

⁷² South African slang for defecating in the bush.

⁷³ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the letter’s context.

issue, sculpting his work from material that came from the hearts of different South Africans surrounding the “Boetman debate” (Du Preez 2003: 302). Director Marthinus Basson used this “skeleton” text as Fourie (2017: 1) dubs it, to create the stage production. The urtext by Fourie consists of various letters from members of the public published in the local media. There is very little in this text to suggest a traditional Aristotelian dramatic arc or narrative. The text is extremely fragmented and contains very little dialogue or dramatic action. I later acquired the performed text, or final text that was developed and workshopped by the cast and director and, due to the workshop process, this was quite different to the original text by Fourie. In many ways, the play cannot be interpreted without the performance dimension, as the performative stands central to how this text functions and interacts with its original form as letters or emails.

The play was developed by dramatist Pieter Fourie with director Marthinus Basson and debuted at the Aardklop National Arts Festival in 2001. It was subsequently staged at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees, as well as at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 2000 (Van Heerden 2008: 114). The play was later performed in the Momentum State Theatre in Pretoria, at the Springs Skouburg and the Wynand Mouton Theatre in Bloemfontein. In 2001 it also won the FNB Vita prize in Bloemfontein in the category, Best New South-African Drama.

Elma Young (2001: 150), in her overview of the Aardklop Festival where the play debuted, notes that the play is unique in that, contrary to other works (plays) which reflect the artist’s (performer’s/writer’s) views on events or trends, *Boetman* grew out of “the people” (*die volk*). Although she writes that history will ultimately decide about the “meaning” of the Boetman debacle, she acknowledges the play can provide a catharsis for the white Afrikaner. She goes on to distinguish between the Northern Afrikaners from what she labels as the “Ou Transvaal” –whom she says are currently in their moment of catharsis – and presumably⁷⁴ Afrikaners from the Southern areas such as Cape Town, a more liberal area, who have “been there and done that” so to speak (Ibid.). In a particularly poignant piece of writing, she emphasises her point that the views of the artist often differ from that of the general public:

⁷⁴ Young does not expand on Afrikaners not from the “ou Transvaal”. I am deducing from her description of the conservative white culture predominant in the North at the time of her article that she sees other parts of the country as having different views.

“Marthinus Basson said in an interview with *Beeld* about *Boetman* that he had been at this point (of catharsis) 20 years ago. That might be so. The average man-on-the-street Afrikaner is only here now and one has to respect this.”⁷⁵

The play opens with the letter by Chris Louw, which the Boetman character recites verbatim, continuing to voice multiple letters written in the aftermath of the author’s article to newspapers. In conversation, Pieter Fourie said that, as far as he is aware, it was the first Afrikaans docu-drama. This play is thus the one that most tangibly reflects the voice of “the people” but challenges traditional notions of the “well-made play” as it is without dramatic structure. The fragmentation of the Border War’s narrative was possibly the only way to deal with such a carefully constructed propaganda machine. By abandoning the traditional dramatic arc and “civilised” structure, Fourie destabilises the values of this propaganda machine which glorified Western ideas that include realism. The play is largely without traditional dramatic action and is structured by juxtaposing letters and the individuals that wrote them. The play’s content will be discussed in more detail in the thematic analysis, but in giving an overview of the play, it is important to note that *Boetman is die bliksem in!* (2017) was the first play written on the Border War after apartheid that was wholly postmodern in its approach and its rejection of a traditional narrative arc. The text moves more towards a performance in that it relies significantly on the director to interpret the text for meaning and extra visual signs as the letters are mostly unchanged in the text. Although Leach’s *Die Spinner* (1984) also has a postmodern approach, it still has an effective narrative arc in the main character that undergirds the play. Fourie’s *Boetman is die bliksem in!* (2017), despite having Louw’s letter in the beginning of the play, has “democratised” the voices in his play in that an individual does not dominate the discourse. Numerous characters respond to Boetman’s plight at the beginning – it starts with Louw’s letter being read in its entirety – and compete to make the audience see a variety of different perspectives on Boetman’s letter. Fourie uses a gay conscript for instance to challenge Boetman’s plight. This character says in many ways that what straight men went through is nothing compared to the mental torture gay conscripts had to undergo.⁷⁶ Women are also used to subvert the claims made in Louw’s letter. Women oppose Boetman’s claims of being the worst off in the new South Africa by highlighting how the apartheid government prevented women from entering into high paying jobs or barred them from certain occupations.⁷⁷ The play is valuable not

⁷⁵ Marthinus Basson het in ‘n onderhoud met *Beeld* oor *Boetman* gesê dat hy 20 jaar gelede al op hierdie punt was. Almeskie. Die gemiddelde man-op-sstraat-Afrikaner is nou daar en dit moet ‘n mens ook maar respekteer.

⁷⁶ This theme will be explored in more depth in the thematic analysis under the section “Homosexuality”.

⁷⁷ The apartheid government, for instance, legislated that women could now continue teaching should they fall pregnant.

only for its innovation of form in the Border Drama, using a docu-drama, but also for its emphasis on a variety of competing narratives in the remembrance of the war. By emphasizing these competing narratives, Fourie unsettles the idea of a “fixed” history, which makes restorative nostalgia impossible. In doing so, he uses critical thinking as an antidote to nostalgia.

3.4.3 ‘*Soldier Boy*’ (Moolman 2007)

Kobus Moolman’s *Soldier Boy* was a finalist in the BBC African Performance radio drama competition in 2003 and was produced for the BBC World Service. It was also read in the Moscow Theatre Festival of New Writing in 2003 (Moolman 2010, online). Four male characters make up the dramatis personae: Ouboet, Boetie, Pa and Outa (2007, online). *Soldier Boy*’s plot is described by Moolman (2007, online) as follows:

“A play that is concerned with issues of disability and the violent consequences of the so-called ‘Border War’ on the fabric of South African society. A young man returns to his overbearing father and disabled brother after a traumatic stint on the ‘border’. He cannot cope with his experiences, and his father and brother (for their own reasons) are unable to accept and understand his pain.”

In an interview with Janet van Eeden on *Litnet*, Moolman (2007, online) describes his inspiration for the play’s plot that came from an interaction with a friend who had served on the Border:

“...the inspiration for the play came from a friend of mine who had been in the army. He’d been involved in terrible experiences with landmines on the border in Angola. He told me how he’d come back home from the army one day and, as he approached his house, he stood outside for a moment. He could hear his sister playing Fleetwood Mac inside. He said looking at the house from the outside and hearing the music made him feel that his home was a reality he’d lost touch with. He was reduced to tears. His story sparked off this *Soldier Boy*, and the play opens with Ouboet, an eighteen-year-old young man, coming back from the border standing outside his childhood home and hearing his brother playing Fleetwood Mac on the radio. It makes him even more aware of how removed he is from his former home and how his childhood has been lost to him forever.”

Of the plays discussed in this overview, Moolman's is the only radio drama. He cleverly interweaves music of the Border era to set the play firmly within the context of the war. The songs mentioned above were also used because of its link with the inspiration for his play. The restrictions that go along with the genre of radio texts, such as the inability to portray physical action, is reflected in another theme Moolman explores, namely that of disability. The main character, Ouboet, has a younger brother with a disability exempting him from conscription. When the older brother returns he has to deal with his own debilitating trauma.

3.4.4 'Johnny is nie dood nie' (Steyn 2011)

Malan Steyn's *Johnny is nie dood nie* (2011) deals in part with the aftermath of the Border War and the apartheid regime. The text was the runner up for the 2004 Anglo Gold Smeltkroes prize with the title: *Eet Alles*. It was first performed at the 2004 Aardklop National Arts Festival in Potchefstroom under this title. Steyn portrays five white middle-class characters in two different eras: "toe" (then) and "tans" (now). In the past era ("toe"), the characters are students in Stellenbosch at the height of apartheid between 1987 and 1989 and in the present era ("tans"), these characters are living in a suburban neighbourhood in 2002. The title *Johnny is nie dood nie* refers to a Koos Kombuis⁷⁸ song about the *Voëlvry* movement. The play was re-worked into a film by Christiaan Olwagen and was released in 2017.

The Border War is mentioned already in Steyn's character descriptions when he uses the experience to describe two of the characters:

“Dirk then: Student, BCom. He first went to the army, actually enjoyed it.
 Dirk now: A breadwinner, he provides for his family.
 Hein then: Student, charismatic. He completed his conscription on the Border.
 Hein now: An unsuccessful entrepreneur, still on the Border.”⁷⁹
 (Steyn 2006)

⁷⁸ An alternative Afrikaans singer-songwriter synonymous with the Struggle. The song, “Johnny is nie dood nie” (Johnny is not dead), was performed by Kombuis at the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival after another famous Voëlvry musician, Johannes Kerkorrel (Ralph Rabie), committed suicide in 2003. Although the song was originally about another musician who had died, “it would henceforth always be associated with Rabie” (Pelser 2016, online).

⁷⁹ Trans. “Dirk toe: Student, BCom. Hy is eers weermag toe; het dit eintlik geniet.
 Tans: ’n Broodwinner, hy sorg vir sy gesin.
 Hein toe: Student, charismaties. Hy het sy diensplig op die grens verrig.
 Tans: ’n Onsuksesvolle entrepreneur, steeds op die grens.”

The fact that their Border experience is included as a means to describe the characters' identities provides a clue as to the way in which this text interweaves the memory of this war in their past with the characters' present reality. Crous (2011: 14) writes that the play explores the influence that the smell of human flesh on the Border had on the character of Hein in his everyday life. The fact that Hein is "still on the Border" is illustrated throughout the text when his PTSD symptoms come to the fore, complicating his marriage with Lise. Steyn's play is one of the most interesting ones in the canon of the Grensdrama as, in my opinion, it goes the furthest in exploring the aftermath of the war and its impact on non-combatant civilians. It also raises important questions about the difficulties of de-militarising a society and about the personal effects of politics.

3.4.5 '*Bos*' (Steyn 2012)

Bos was developed for the City of Cape Town Acting Competition for High School learners and was performed at the ABSA KKNK in 2012. Letitia Pople writes of this production that Marthinus Basson delivers "theatre for the mind (as usual)" which challenges and shocks audiences. Pople writes in her overview of the festival that "Steyn's excellent text about teenagers on a survival camp deserves more time on stage" as it is "theatre for tomorrow's audiences"⁸⁰ (2012). A production of *Bos* was staged again at the 2013 *Woordfees* in Stellenbosch with a cast from the University of Stellenbosch's Drama department, again directed and designed by Marthinus Basson and produced by his production company, *TEATERteater*. I saw this production and was struck by its thematic relevance. Themes of masculinity and coming-of-age rituals were explored against the backdrop of the "new" South Africa. Steyn's text is particularly interesting as it explores the effects of the Border War on the second generation: veterans' children. The play is not a Border War play as such as it does not deal directly with events that took place during the Border War. It does, however, deal with the climate of hyper-masculinity in the war's aftermath. The play opens with a monologue by the lead character, a psychopathic war veteran, who exclaims that:

"Us, at least we had conscription. At the age of 18 with a R1 in hand and a landmine underfoot, you quickly grew up. But kids today? There are no clear borders: they just float, no direction whatsoever."⁸¹

⁸⁰ Trans. "Steyn se uitstekende teks oor tieners op 'n oorlewingskamp verdien nog opvoerbeurte. Dit is teater vir môre se gehore."

⁸¹ Trans. "Ons, ons het darem nog diensplig gehad. Op ouderdom 18 met 'n R1 in die hand en 'n landmyn onder die voet, het jy gou jou jou kinderskoene ontgroe. Maar kinders vandag? Daar is geen duidelike grens nie: hulle dobber, trap water, koersloos."

(Steyn 2012:2)

This refrain is echoed time and again by Border War veterans and by the generation that underwent conscription. It is held forth as a badge of masculinity or a rite of passage of sorts, which separated the “boys from the men”. Steyn explores how this manifests in the second generation by looking at what its closest modern equivalent might be for a generation of young white Afrikaners – he places these sons of Border War veterans in a survival camp setting with a power-hungry leader. This provides an interesting look at individual responses to high-stress situations and subverted positions of power. Later on in the drama the same character, the tyrannical camp leader, reverberates his stance on masculinity and reveals chauvinist views often associated with soldiers at war:

“Mothers are the enemy. They keep you small. Small can’t survive the real world. Mommy’s boy. I was also mocked. But who leaves the womb, who leaves his mother’s home of his own accord? And all of that to live in a cruel world alone. A world full of pain and angst and divorce and single beds and humiliations ... to live in this world alone? Primitive tribes abducted their young boys at night, ripped them away from their mother’s bosom. Took them to the bush. At least we had the Border (war), who do kids have today?”⁸²

(Steyn 2012: 11)

This need of the character to have some sort of ritual or rite of passage to assert masculinity is one that runs throughout *Bos*. Malan cleverly juxtaposes the isiXhosa rite of passage or initiation ritual, the Abakweta, with young Afrikaner youths who live in the shadow of their fathers’ war, who substitute their fathers’ experiences by their own experiences of hunting or exploration:

“JJ: Sir you must really come hunt with us. My dad fought in Askari. Angola. ’83.”⁸³

(Steyn 2012: 14)

⁸²Trans. “Ma’s is die vyand. Hulle hou jou klein. Klein kan nie in die wêreld oorleef nie. Mamma se seuntjie, ek is ook gespot. Maar wie sal die baarmoeder, die moederhuis uit vrye wil verlaat? En dit om alleen in ’n wrede wêreld vol pyn en verskrikking en egskeidings, enkelbeddens en vernederings ... Om in hierdie wêreld op jou eie te moet leef? Primitiewe stamme het hulle seuns in die nag ontvoer, met geweld van die moederbors weggeskeur. Bos toe gevat, ons het darem nog die grens gehad, wat het die kinders vandag?”

⁸³ Trans. “JJ: Meneer moet rêrig saam met ons kom jag. My pa’t geveg in Askari. Angola. ’83.”

The boys in the play continually make politically incorrect homophobic and misogynistic statements which speak of their rejection and fear of all that is feminine:

“Rocco: Their moms moaned at the school. Just ’cos we gave them a few wedgies.
 What wankers would whine about getting a wedgie to his mom?
 JJ: Faggots.”⁸⁴
 (Steyn 2012: 15)

The comment above links to Reddy’s analysis of the discourse within the military setting. He asserts that within the heterosexual matrix of the army, one finds a heterosexual system of reversal where agents of masculinity reduce the male subject to a female object, in this case: homosexuality (Reddy 2005: 106). Whilst reading Steyn’s play, I was struck by some of the similarities in the text with some of the other Border plays that deal with the characters’ fathers. The style of talking and insults is very similar to the style and tone of Akerman’s *Somewhere on the border*. As with *Johnny is nie Dood nie*, Malan explores themes that are ignored in other plays written on the war. The most interesting of these also being the illusions of war and notions of the heroic.

3.4.6 ‘Tree aan!’ (Opperman 2012)

Deon Opperman’s musical adaptation of *Môre is ’n lang dag* (1986) as *Tree aan!* (2012) was very controversial. The director’s note states that the play was written as a “living monument” in reaction to the government’s decision to exclude former South-African Defence Force (SADF) soldiers who passed away during the Border War from the Freedom Park memorial (Krüger 2013: 421). Lida Krüger (Ibid.) writes in her article for *Litnet* that this assertion on Opperman’s part automatically makes the musical a political event. Flip Buys (2011, online) wrote a reaction to Opperman’s musical in the *Beeld* newspaper entitled, “Afrikaner, take back your past”.⁸⁵ In this article, he writes:

⁸⁴ Trans. “Rocco: Hulle ma’s het by die skool loop kla. Oor ons hulle ‘n paar wedgies gegee het. Watse wanker kla by sy ma oor hy ‘n wedgie gekry het?”

JJ: Faggots.”

⁸⁵ Trans. “Afrikaner, vat jou verlede terug”.

“Today every farm murder and every race law, every pothole and corruption case, every new humiliation and degradation is proof that we were right to wear the brown uniform.”⁸⁶

Krüger (2013: 421) interprets this passage as the author’s affirmation of the Border War as something that was necessary; that caused the ANC to part with their communist ideals; and that the current government has betrayed the country by not building on the victories of the SADF. Stellenbosch Professor of Philosophy, Anton van Niekerk (2011, online), reacted to this in a published opinion piece entitled, “Whites HAVE a lot of guilt”⁸⁷:

“It might well be that Moscow’s influence over the ANC was stronger during the war than it is today. To deduce from this that the apartheid regime launched military attacks against the ANC to promote ‘democracy and the rule of law’ is a laughable idea.”⁸⁸

Van Niekerk was attacked in his office building at the University of Stellenbosch after this opinion piece was published by the conservative leader, Abel Malan, on 13 July 2011 (Gerber 2011, online).

Tree Aan! (2012) is unique in that it very directly confronts more liberal readings of the events that took place on the Border War and quite overtly casts the Border War veteran as a victim. While the play is largely based on Opperman’s earlier text, *Môre is ’n lang dag*, this production, written almost twenty years after the original play, takes a very different stance on the events that took place in Opperman’s youth. One of the main differences between the original play and its musical adaptation is its change of perspective. Krüger (2013: 437) writes the following in her analysis of the musical as an example of restorative nostalgia:

“... contrary to *Tree aan!* (2011), *Môre is ’n Lang Dag* (1986) questions the status quo and interprets the historical events not from the vantage point of another era but from the perspective of the conscript”.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Trans. “Vandag is elke plaasmoord en elke rassewet, elke slagat en korrupsieszaak, en elke nuwe vernedering en verontregting ’n bewys dat ons reg was om die bruin uniform te dra.”

⁸⁷ Trans. “Wittes hê baie skuld”.

⁸⁸ Trans. “Dit mag wel wees dat die ANC in die oorlogsjare sterker as vandag onder Moskou se invloed gestaan het. Om egter op grond daarvan te redeneer dat die apartheidsregime die ANC militêr aangepak het ten einde ‘demokrasie en die regstaat’ te beskerm, is ’n lagwekkende idee.”

⁸⁹ Trans. “...en bied ’n interpretasie van historiese gebeure, nie vanuit die insigte van ’n ander tydperk nie, maar vanuit die perspektief van ’n dienspligtige”.

In *Môre is 'n lang dag* (1986), Opperman portrays the Border War with nihilism and cynicism, and he is critical of the powers that be: the apartheid government⁹⁰. *Tree Aan!* (2012) engages in nostalgia by portraying veterans as heroes without the nuance associated with their position as perpetrators who participated in upholding the system he previously criticised.

3.4.7 'Moffie' (2012)

Whilst this was not a stage play as such, but rather a dance performance based on a novel, this award-winning work by Bailey Snyman deserves mention as it attempted to construct a narrative on stage that links directly with the text-based works discussed in this chapter. Snyman created a performance about the confessional memoir, *Moffie*⁹¹ (2006), by André Carl van der Merwe. Snyman wanted to use “the themes of the original novel”:

“ ... [to] examine the experiences of men and women in the military, incorporating Snyman’s research into ‘medical’ torture, where gay conscripts in the South African Defence Force under apartheid were forced to have their homosexuality ‘cured’ by undergoing electroshock therapy and botched sex changes.”

(Rhodes 2012, online)

In 1999, *The Aversion Project* was published, a document which investigated the “Human rights abuses of gays and lesbians in the South African Defence Force by health workers during the apartheid era” (Van Zyl, De Grunchy, Lapinsky, Lewin & Reid 1991, online). This document provides evidence “of homosexual or gay conscripts’ being sent to psychiatric wards in military hospitals and subjected to extreme and violent forms of treatment” (Edlmann 2014: 179). Homosexuality was also illegal under the Immorality Act Amendment of 1968, meaning that men suspected to be homosexual could have been handed over to the police for legal prosecution (Edlmann 2014: 90). It is against this backdrop that Van der Merwe constructs a novel, thinly veiled with his own experiences as a conscript. In their overview of the Grahamstown Festival of 2012 in the *South African Theatre Journal*, Flockemann, Cornelius and Phillips (2012: 219) write diplomatically that, “At times a much promoted new large-scale production does not quite live up to the hype – such as *Moffie*”. The reviewers felt that the “Thinkfest discussion between Snyman and Andre van der Merwe, the author of the novel which Snyman has adapted, was extremely

⁹⁰ This aspect is discussed in more depth in the play’s overview.

⁹¹ A derogatory slang term for a gay man. Its closest English counterpart is probably “faggot”.

interesting in highlighting the silence around abuse against gay men in the South African Defence Force (SADF)” (Flockemann et al. 2012: 219). However, they felt that this discussion failed to translate on stage as the production did not engage sophisticatedly enough with its very rich subject material. They explained that “the interactions between the dancers seemed too stylised and oddly remote, and thus not edgy enough to do justice to the material”. Other critics were much more scathing in their critiques. Charl Blignaut (2012, online), an ex-conscrip and a gay man himself, wrote a very frank review of the production in the *City Press Newspaper* entitled, “Apartheid as erotic Disneyland”. I will quote him substantially as I feel his review contains many key concepts relevant to questions surrounding the performance of the Border War. He starts the review by stating his initial expectations of the play and his ultimate experience of the representation of a history he has lived through:

“I wanted to know about the agonised protagonist’s parents and his Calvinist upbringing and his liberation and traps. I wanted to know about the brutal pseudo-scientific experiments conducted in the army by apartheid doctors that tried to correct gay behaviour. I wanted to feel his inner process and his shame and his desire. All I got was the desire. *Moffie* spectacularly plays into the hands of the cliché that all gay men think about is sex.”

This very stereotypical portrayal of homosexuality neglects themes of trauma and torture inflicted on gay conscripts in favour of re-enforcing what Blignaut (2012, online) calls “pathologies around gay male sexuality”. The other criticism raised by almost all of the reviewers of the production, was about the inclusion of the American political debate surrounding the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” phenomenon, which at that stage was a hot topic in the international media. An article about the production of *Moffie* was even included in the international publication, *The Atlantic* (Kehe 2012, online),

“When President Obama ditched “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” last September, ripples went global. One crossed the Atlantic and found its way to a dance studio in South Africa. There, it reached a young choreographer struggling, at that very same moment, to decide how – and if – he wanted to do a show about his own country’s troubled, long-repressed relationship with gay men in the military. This bit of news from America helped him decide, giving him not just the confidence to proceed with the project, but also proof of

something he'd already suspected: that this was an issue that transcended national borders."

This universal theme was explored at the expense of the very pressing local context and should not have transcended borders, critics argued. Blignaut (2012, online) writes, rightly so in my opinion:

"There are many works in Grahamstown that are trying to do what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission never achieved – meaningful discussion about the brutality we lived through so that we can achieve reconciliation in the future."

This is especially important in works created explicitly about the country's apartheid past. Blignaut (2012, online) feels that Snyman's production completely ignores this plight of reconciliation by falling into the trap of universalism and generalisation:

"*Moffie*, the dance version, has ... curiously opted to rather address America's issues with gays in the army. Despite a clip of Verwoerd at the start and the odd reading from the book, we got multiple clips from American media. Instead of *Voëlvy*⁹² we got American folk songs. Instead of our past we got America's present. Perhaps this was an attempt to make the work relevant. But what it says is that the pain of our collective past is irrelevant by comparison. It simply locks us back up in that prison."

This heart-breaking last line of his review voices an incredibly important aspect regarding the sensitivity and art with which the artist/performer should explore these topics. An under-explored theme or a pastiche of themes that seem related in a very superficial way, can lead to further complication and muddling of the relevant themes. This can even prevent what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission could not achieve – meaningful discussion about the complexities of the past (Blignaut 2012, online). The alienation and aesthetically crude representation of a group of marginalised men can lead to further rifts in the collective reconciliation effort.

⁹² An alternative white Afrikaner movement during apartheid. This movement, known for its rock festivals and anti-establishment stances, included musicians Koos Kombuis, Bernoldus Niemand and Johannes Kerkorrel. The movement also featured extensively in Malan Steyn's *Johnny is nie Dood nie* (2011), the title borrowed from a popular Koos Kombuis song. See Smit's (1992) dissertation on the subject: "*Afrikaans alternative popular music 1986–1990: An analysis of the music of Bernoldus Niemand and Johannes Kerkorrel*".

Moffie earned Bailey Snyman the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Dance in 2012. However, two years later, in an article called “Award winners can lose at NAF games”, he was cited negatively as an example of a Standard Bank Young Artist who had been given large amounts of funding: “... so the thinking is that these young recipients – who must be under the age of 35 – are given the wings to fly. Unfortunately, this doesn’t always happen” (Corrigal 2014, online). In an overview of the history of the prize, the production was used as an example of how this expectation can backfire: “Bailey Snyman, a winner in the dance category, delivered a trite and didactic work in 2012 called *Moffie*” (Corrigal 2014, online). This is especially disappointing as his subject matter desperately needed to be given a voice on stage⁹³. The production possibly serves as a warning to artists to do very thorough research on the themes they want to explore before attempting to tackle issues so pertinent to the contemporary discourse on reconciliation.

3.5 Thematic commonalities in Border Dramas

In doing a literature review of plays that can be classified as Border dramas, I found it necessary to illustrate the themes in the following way to get an overview of the thematic parallels between the texts. I have also included other elements or motifs that I found were common to the plays. These clusters of thematic content can serve as an overview to see which themes in the collective are being explored and voiced; and which themes are being ignored or silenced. It is also useful to measure – qualitatively of course – to see which elements of the discourse are not of value to the public or collective. Later, when analysing the thematic clusters found online in the veteran’s discussions, elements that artists deem important might also be reprioritised or put into context. As Elma Young (2001: 150) said of *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* (Fourie 2017), there is often a great difference between that which the artists and “the people” are wrestling with. Although some playwrights are Border War veterans, and thus blur the lines between these two groups, I feel it is useful to explore the one and then the other in the next chapter.

Thematic parallels in Border War dramas

⁹³ I would argue that this is especially important in the context of the Grahamstown Festival, a festival that has catered increasingly to a non-Afrikaans-speaking audience in recent years. Apart from Greig Coetzee’s excellent work on the subject in his two plays, when compared to the Afrikaans body of work, this debate is not as central to the discourses on the English stage. I am of course aware that separating the Afrikaans and English stage is an artificial mechanism, or binary, in post-apartheid South Africa as many plays are multi-lingual. However, there still seems to be a rift in the topics and aesthetics of the two (possibly artificially distinguished) bodies of work.

Plays	<i>Some-where on the border</i>	<i>Die Spinner</i>	<i>Môre is 'n lang dag</i>	<i>Boetman is die bliksem in!</i>	<i>White men with weapons</i>	<i>Soldier Boy</i>	<i>Johnny is nie dood nie</i>	<i>Johnny Boskak is feeling funny</i>	<i>Bos</i>	<i>Tree aan!</i>	<i>Moffie</i>
Year	1983	1984	1984	2000	2001	2003	2004	2009	2012	2012	2013
Language	English	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	English	English	Afrikaans	English	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	n/a
Genre	Drama	drama (one-man show)	Drama	drama (post-dramatic theatre/ docu-drama)	drama (one-man show)	radio drama	drama	drama (one-man show)	drama	musical	Dance
A generational gap			X	X	X		x				
Fathers & Sons				X					x		
Forgotten, Angry, Confused & Endangered (FACE)		X		X			x	x	x	X	
Female Perspective		X		X			x		x	X	
Homo-sexuality	X		X	X	X		x		x		X
PTSD	X	X		X	X	X	x	x	x		

A: Generation gap

As with Louw's Boetman letter⁹⁴, almost all the plays I came across cast a measure of blame for the older generation of generals. This translates even further into what can be described as a generational gap as young men (conscripts) struggle to understand how an older generation of military leaders could send them into battle. This blame for the politicians that sent young men to war is seen in both the plays written during and after the Border War. Leach's *Die Spinner* (1986) has as one of the characters portrayed, a puppet master. As mentioned during the play's overview, this character both starts and ends off the play and controls the main character, the conscript, Jan. Although the play does not overtly confront these generals, it gives the system that forced young men into conscription a concrete metaphor. The puppet master becomes the older generation that gave the orders for young men like Jan to be sent to the Border to serve in what many would describe as a senseless war. In Greig Coetzee's *White men with weapons* (2001), the Staff sergeant character represents a kind of answer to the younger generation of conscripts' finger-pointing at his generation:

“And you stand at attention when I talk to you! Come come come come right here! And you look at me and you show some fucking respect. I'm 43 years old. I'm old enough to be your father. I'm a staff sergeant.

I know what you fucking ... what are you ... lawyer, teacher, engineer, I know what you pricks think of us. You think we're the problem. You think we're the racials. You think we're the kaffir killers. Well, troep, you know fuck all, fuck all. When you were sitting there at university, writing all your fancy words, and waving your stupid little placard and smoking pot, I was on the border fucking my life up for you. And when you get out of here and they give you your BMW and your expense account, just you remember that it was suckers like me that kept all that shit away from you and your perfect world.”

(Coetzee 2001: 223)

It is interesting that the staff sergeant only confronts the veterans who are employed as professional people. It would seem that his attack is aimed especially at white-collar, educated veterans of the Border War. This implication also alludes to a commonly held view that educated veterans are more liberal in their political views and thus more prone to criticise the apartheid regime. This extract also refers to the fact that university-educated men were given “softer” administrative jobs

⁹⁴ See Chapter 1 for a short discussion of the context of the Boetman letter. See also Fourie's play about the subject, *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* (2017).

in the army that was linked to the profession they were trained in. The passage thus not only criticises the younger generation, but also their cushioned upbringing that allows them the necessary distance to criticise older war veterans. Steyn's play, *Johnny is nie dood nie*, depicts precisely these liberal, university-educated characters. Johnny and Hein discuss their disgust at the political leaders of the apartheid era near the end of the play. This is just before the climax of the play as Johnny wants to reveal that he had secretly worked for the South African Police Force as a spy (Steyn 2011: 70):

“Hein: We're fucked. We're all fucked an we know it.
 Johnny: I'm not hiding anything anymore.
 Hein: We know it and we laugh about it! We're smiling as we go down. We laugh, and we laugh at them, because they don't even know they're fucked! This country's in for a fucking dive and we know it. Their secret's out.
 Johnny: I'm gonna start over, Hein. I'm finished ... I'm finished with these reptile lords' lies!
 Hein: Not all the Casspirs in the world can save them now.”⁹⁵

Steyn's wordplay with Hein's “reptile lords” is aimed at the notorious apartheid prime minister, P.W. Botha, who was nicknamed *groot krokkedil* ⁹⁶. The lies told by these politicians are shown to be bogus and in many of the plays, young men are shown to be victims of an older generation's bad decisions. This theme often illustrates a missing link between the “PW” generation and the “*Boetman*” generation.

One of the Boetman letter's central concerns is with this older generation's detachment from the realities of conscription as their generation is one that has never fought. This part of the letter is included in Pieter Fourie's *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* (2017):

“Your generation was the first, and possibly the last, in Afrikaner history, that never fought in a war themselves: born too late for the Second Freedom South African War; too young

⁹⁵ Trans. “Hein: Ons is fucked. Ons is almal fucked, maar ons weet dit.

Johnny: Ek steek niks meer weg nie.

Hein: Ons weet dit, en ons lag daaroor! We're smiling as we go down. Ons lag, en ons lag vir hulle, want hulle weet nie eens hulle's fucked nie! Hierdie land gaan vir 'n moerse dive, en ons weet dit. Hulle geheim is uit.

Johnny: Ek gaan oorbegin, Hein. Ek's klaar ... Ek's klaar met die fokken reptielorde se gelieg!”

Hein: Nie al die Casspirs in die wêreld kan hulle meer red nie.”

⁹⁶ Trans. “the big crocodile”

for the First World War and too German neutral for the Second World War; too busy thinking and pondering, and planning regimes and other constellations and finding justification for the Border War.

You were the first generation of Afrikaners that sent your children to go and die on your behalf.

Those that refused to defend your idiotic dreams with the weapons you gave us were imprisoned; or worse, declared insane. Even then they said the system is too crazy for words, those who understood even then were declared ‘schizophrenic and unfit for military service’.

...

And you? Where were you?”⁹⁷

(Fourie 2017: 3–4)

The phrases above are clearly holding the generation of military and political leaders to account for their role in the Border War. The apartheid era’s values reflected those of a militarised society where an individual’s obedience, loyalty and compliance with the larger collective was prized above all: “uniformity creates power”.⁹⁸ It is interesting to note, however, that in this part of the letter especially, the author – or in the play’s case the actor – is largely excusing his own participation in this war by stating the alternatives to fighting in the war. In some way, he is excusing his generation by placing the blame squarely on his elders. Before setting off on the talk about the struggles⁹⁹ of white men in post-apartheid South Africa, referring to unemployment and the effect of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)¹⁰⁰, the actor laments the Boetman generation’s shame over past events caused by this older generation of generals:

⁹⁷ Trans. “U geslag was die eerste, en moontlik die laaste, in die Afrikaner geskiedenis, wat nooit self ‘n oorlog gevoer het nie: te laat gebore vir die Tweede Vryheidstryd; te jonk vir die Eerste Wêreldoorlog; te Duits-neutraal vir die Tweede Wêreldoorlog; te hard aan die dink en wonder, en staatsbestelle en ander konstellaties beplan en regverdiging soek vir die Grensoorlog.

Julle was die eerste geslag Afrikaners wat jul kinders afgevaardig het om vir julle te gaan sterf.

Dié wat nie jul gek drome wou verdedig met die wapens wat julle aan ons uitgereik het nie, is tronkstraf opgelê; of erger, mal verklaar. Tóé het hulle al gesê die stelsel is te gek vir woorde, dié wat destyds al begryp het, is “skisofrenies en ongekik vir militêre diens” verklaar.

En u? Waar was u? ”

⁹⁸ Trans. “eendrag maak mag”

⁹⁹ I use the term “struggle” only to echo some of the sentiments in Boetman’s letter. These “struggles” should be read with a sense of irony as almost ten years after the letter was published, South Africa still ranks as the most unequal country in the world - an economic divide still largely defined along racial lines.

¹⁰⁰ This legislation has since been adapted and is no longer referred to as BEE.

“You never tasted that humiliation. Not you or your whole generation. You merely created the atmosphere in which it could happen.”¹⁰¹

(Fourie 2017: 6)

The phrase above is somewhat ambiguous as it is unclear whether the actor is referring to what he sees as their defeat in the Border War and the eventual demise of apartheid, or the shame of being lead around the bush to believe the state’s nationalist propaganda. In a way, the actor is saying that this older generation made the mess and that his generation is left to pick up the pieces in contemporary South Africa. Although this sense of anger and blame can be understood as a natural reaction to the circumstance he describes if the conscript should refuse to fight in the Border War, the fact that the actor largely fails to address his own culpability in this system may be problematic. The ending of the letter and the actor’s monologue cleverly sums up the complexity of both the blame he holds for his father’s generation of generals, and an acknowledgement of the shame interwoven in this as, in retrospect, his generation followed the orders of the generals he so despises:

“I am too old to be totally innocent. I am too young to be fully culpable. I am too innocent to formulate excuses. I am too guilty to wash my hands.”¹⁰²

(Fourie 2017: 10)

The sentences above captured the sentiments of a generation of conscripts caught between wanting to defend themselves as products of the system they were born into and the realization that ignorance and threat do not justify evil. There is a simultaneous need for the conscript to be understood within a specific political and social context of being at the mercy of “the generals” whilst at the same time acknowledging his participation in an unjust system and the implications this holds for restitution and reconciliation.

B: Fathers and sons

¹⁰¹ Trans. “Jy het nooit daardie vernedering gesmaak nie. Nie jy of jou hele geslag nie. Julle het bloot die omstandighede daarvoor geskep.”

¹⁰² Trans. “Ek is te oud om heeltemal onskuldig te wees. Ek is te jonk om ten volle aandadig te wees. Ek is te onskuldig om verskonings te versin. Ek is te skuldig om my hande te was.”

As an extension of the theme above, another theme the new plays explore, is the effect of the war on the second generation, Boetman's children. Fourie (2017: 8) includes a letter in his text *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* which voices the recurring theme of the "absent father":

"I want to say a word about the twenty-year-olds – the Border War babies – who have to deal with their fathers' absence. To them who as young adults have to stare at their fathers with empty eyes, because no communication was established during their formative years. They are also the young adults who sit with their parents' lost hope and dreams and bitterness about a senseless war."¹⁰³

The above letter is about the effect of physical absence of fathers who served in the Border War. The plays written later on in the aftermath of the Border War also deals with the effect of these fathers' emotional absence. One of the characters in *Bos*, (Steyn 2012:22) a high school student, talks of his fathers' parenting style in a monologue about an experience hunting with him:

"JJ: (to the audience) I remember it as if it were yesterday. Grade 6. I'm twelve. Father says: leave the .22. It's time to start shooting like a man. Father chases me up the attic. 'Go fetch yourself an army trunk.' Father's army trunks are full of bullets. Father was in the army. In the war in the bush. And I know: today I'm shooting with a big gun. A 270, 323, maybe even an R1 if I'm lucky."¹⁰⁴

This description of the son's introduction to hunting, and indirectly his passage into masculinity, is closely interwoven with his father's experience of war. Steyn cleverly illustrates this in this particular monologue by letting the son shoot animals with bullets probably intended for human lives. This use of a concrete symbol of war, namely an army trunk which contains weapons of destruction – hidden in the Jungian attic – is an example of Steyn's sensitive exploration of the son's quest to understand and ultimately to please his father. Unlike his father, however, the son

¹⁰³ Trans. "Ek wil tog graag 'n lansië breek vir die twintigjarige – die grensoorlog-babas wat sonder hul vader moet klaarkom. Hulle wat vandag as jong volwassenes met leë oë na pa staar omdat daar geen kommunikasie in die vormingsjare kan plaasvind nie. Hulle is ook die jong volwassenes wat vandag met hul ouers se verydelde hoop en drome en bitterheid oor 'n sinnelose oorlog opgeskep sit."

¹⁰⁴ Trans. "JJ: (aan gehoor) Ek onthou dit soos gister. Graad 6. Ek's twaalf. Pa sê: los die .22. Tyd om soos 'n man te begin skiet. Pa jaag my die solder op. 'Gaan haal vir jou 'n army trommel'. Pa se army trommels is vol patrone. Pa was in die army. In die oorlog in die bos. En ek weet: vandag skiet ek met 'n groot geweer. 'n 270, 323, dalk 'n R1, as ek gelukkig is."

is never part of a “real” war. His masculinity can only be “measured” by his performance in an Afrikaner hunting ritual:

“JJ: *(to the audience)* I remember it as if it were yesterday. Run, shouts my father, the buck’s throat needs to be slit. A buck needs to bleed out otherwise the meat rots. (...) I hesitate with the pocketknife, my brother laughs, ‘Are you afraid of the blood?’ To hell with you, I think ... I take my knife, slit the springbok’s throat, I see how the life bleeds out of him. The hairs on his back stand up and his skin smells like honey.”¹⁰⁵
(Steyn 2012: 25)

The test of masculinity in this section seems to be whether the individual is “afraid of blood”. Steyn cleverly uses a mixed metaphor in describing the animal’s smell as that of honey. Honey is commonly used by hunters to describe the smell of a newly shot springbuck. The sweetness of honey is in stark contrast to the boy’s bitter experience. It could also signify the “sweet” smell of victory for the boy as a kind of archetypal male victor. Apart from the boy’s father, his brother is a consistent voice in the process of completing the ritual, egging him on, questioning and challenging his masculinity. The brother represents something of the boys’ peer group. This challenge from the brother is the final push the boy needs to fulfil the act of killing the animal:

“JJ: *(to the audience)* ... I cut open his stomach, from his balls to his ribcage, I pull out his guts and stomach. Leave the heart and kidneys and liver inside ... Cut off his balls, says my dad. His ball bag you use for your pens. I clean my knife on my buck’s skin.”¹⁰⁶
(Steyn 2012: 25)

Steyn describes a well-known practice in hunting, using the animal’s testicles to make memorabilia. He is urged to cut off the animal’s masculine parts to display as a symbol of his own masculinity, as the young boy’s trophy. This trophy, a pencil case in this play, is particularly poetic

⁹⁹ Trans. “JJ: *(aan gehoor)* Ek onthou dit soos gister. Hol, skree my my pa, die bok se keel moet af. ‘n Bok moet uitbloei, anders raak die vleis vrot (...) Ek huiwer met die knipmes, my broer lag, ‘is jy bang vir die bloed?’ Te hel met jou, dink ek ... ek vat my mes, sny my springbok keel af, ek sien hoe bloei die lewe uit hom uit. Hy pronk soos hy doodgaan, hare regop op die rug, sy vel ruik na heuning.”

Trans. “JJ: *(aan gehoor)* ... Ek sny sy maag oop, van sy balle tot by die ribbekas, trek sy derms en maag uit. Los die hart en niere en lewer binne ... Sny sy balle af, sê pa. Sy balsak gebruik jy vir jou penne. Ek maak my mes skoon op my bok se vel.”

as it suggests youth and innocence and signifies “civility” and education. This primitive ritual is juxtaposed with these elements when the boy is encouraged to affirm his own masculinity by depriving another organism of its own. It also possibly alludes to the absurdity of a hunting ritual in modern times. Hunting in a time when the spoils of the hunt will be used as a pencil case clearly distinguishes this ritual from its primitive origins when it was practiced as a means of survival. The ritual has become something of an anachronism – used more to test and reaffirm a constructed masculinity. After completing the task of cutting off the animal’s testicles, the boy is congratulated by his father:

“JJ: *(to the audience)* My father shakes my hand. My brother smirks: he knows what’s coming. ‘Congratulations’, my father says, ‘that was your first’ as he smears the buck’s blood over my face. My brother cuts a piece of liver and hands it to me. ‘Swallow’, my father says, ‘swallow’. I turn away, I’m going to be sick. My father breaks the buck’s stomach over my head. My brother laughs from his stomach. I try to imagine the honey smell of the buck, I want to puke, but I keep everything inside, I swallow, I swallow...”¹⁰⁷
(Steyn 2012: 25)

It seems the son has to swallow whatever his father gives him, even if it makes him sick, to win his father and brother’s approval. He has to swallow what he has shot with his father’s rifle.

C: Forgotten, Angry, Confused and Endangered (FACE)

In reviewing the plays written about the Border War, I find a common sentiment that I sum up as “Forgotten, Angry, Confused and Endangered” or (FACE). This characteristic is found mostly in the plays written after the Border War but is also present in some ways in the earlier plays. Although the emotions mentioned above are not dangerous in themselves, they hold the potential to create the right atmosphere for restorative nostalgia. Greig Coetzee manages to avoid this in his acclaimed play, *White men with weapons* (2001). This is set at the end of the Border War just as the country was transitioning into a democracy. The character of Rocco, an Afrikaans farmer, epitomises what white men underwent during this period when enemies suddenly became

¹⁰⁷ Trans. “JJ: *(aan gehoor)* ... My pa skud my blad. My broer grinnik: hy weet wat kom. ‘Geluk’ sê pa, ‘dit was jou eerste’ en hy smear my bok se bloed oor my gesig. My broer sny ’n stuk lewer en gee dit aan. ‘Sluk’ sê pa, ‘sluk’. Ek draai weg, ek wil naar word. My pa breek die bok se pens oor my kop. My broer lag uit sy maag uit. Ek probeer my weer die heuningreuk van die bok verbeel, ek wil kots, maar ek hou als in, ek sluk, ek sluk ...”

compatriots. He compares the “old people’s war” (the Anglo-Boer War) with the Border War and laments his generation’s war as one without clear-cut enemies.

“But those old people, my old people, they knew what they were fighting for. Not like this place. The Army. One day we must catch the Kaffirs and the next day we must so maar just set them all free. And now they don’t know what to do with us anymore, so what do they do, they send us to dig holes. While the government try to make up their minds of we must kill the Kaffirs or we must kiss them, we are sent to dig holes in the middle of the Karoo during a drought. The same drought that’s killing my farm. Why? Because I’m not there, I’m here.”

(Coetzee 2001: 221)

The irony of the white regime’s sudden embrace of black politicians is also shown as a source of confusion as many Border War veterans returned to South Africa to find the very “terrorists” they had fought against, were suddenly in power. The enemy, as defined by the state, had not really been the enemy as the humanity of a perceived “terrorist” like Nelson Mandela was shown after 1994. Especially in the plays written in the aftermath of the Border War, a great sense of disillusionment with the old system is present in the characters’ analyses of their conscription years. Another character in *White men with weapons*, the staff sergeant, says in a drunken monologue:

“I am not the one who played all those fucking ‘dirty tricks’. I’m the sucker. The real dirty trick was making me fight a war my whole life and then telling me ‘It’s all a mistake – the war’s been cancelled’.”

(Ibid.: 223)

Whereas the FACE theme was only touched on in the monologues of the two characters in *White men with weapons*, as shown above, his later play, *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny* (2009) explores this theme at length. In contrast to *White men with weapons* which is set during the war, *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny* is about a veteran living in post-apartheid and post-war South Africa. The main character, Johnny, speaks frankly about the alienation (Alone) he felt after his time as a conscript:

“And then it ends,

One day you klaar out,
 But your civvy friends
 Are all too far out.
 You scheme it's home-time
 But really, it's alone time.
 You spot your old Chinas when you waai back possie
 But you check in their eyes and they all reckon you bossies.”
 (Coetzee 2009: 13)

What makes *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny* a particularly interesting play is that it portrays other veterans besides those of the Border War. As part of the play's humorous plot, Johnny decides to meet up with his old friends Sparkplug Majozi and Tshabalala Two-stroke, ex-MK¹⁰⁸ soldiers who “owed [him] a favour from once upon a time, when the boere¹⁰⁹ were in charge and their arses on the line” (Coetzee 2009: 13). This favour means they end up giving Johnny an AK47 with which to shoot his new girlfriend's villainous ex-boyfriend. Johnny describes how they met as follows:

“I was the troepie
 Who saw they were just
 Two darkies with no hope
 ...
 I was the one with the gun,
 But they checked my white confusion
 We started to rap
 Till I checked that the gap
 Between them and me
 Was a load of crap.
 They were Rastas
 I was just a
 White-boy who smoked weed.
 We shared some kaya
 Through barbed wire,
 And I set them free.”

¹⁰⁸ Short for Mkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC during apartheid.

¹⁰⁹ Boers – white Afrikaners

(Coetzee 2009: 33–34)

Johnny is thus shown to have had insight into the injustices of apartheid while he was a soldier. He says he and these friends “fought for different armies” but “hated the same larnes” (Coetzee 2009: 34). What makes this inclusion of MK veterans so significant is the role this plays in undercutting the pity a character like Johnny can evoke in the audience. Coetzee is not only showing a white man in poverty, he is also showing his black counterpart who fought on the “winning” side to be living in worse conditions. Veterans on both sides of the battle are shown to be disillusioned by the new South Africa. In this way neither the past nor the present is being shown without nuance.

The disillusionment about the Border war what the Border War meant is seen most pertinently in *Boetman is die bliksem in!* (Fourie 2017), evident even from the stylised exclamation mark in the title. As the play grew from Louw’s letters of retrospective disillusionment about the Border War, the eventual discourse in the press media led to the inspection (and introspection) of a post-militarised society. As Reddy (2005: 109) so aptly puts it: “research about the border, the border lands and border literature points to the fact that border zones are very closely linked with the post-givens”. Our thinking around – and representation of the Border – thus reflects, to a large extent, our views on cultural identity and “home” (Ibid.). When looking at Fourie’s play especially, one is confronted by what Reddy calls a “marker of time” in his representation of the aftermath of the Border War. Louw’s letter embodies the anger that followed the revelations of the evils of apartheid and, after exposure to international media, the realisation of the extent of the system. His letter comes at a time when “Apartheid is dead” (Fourie 2017: 8), and Louw is angry at the rapid transformation at his expense. This perceived zero-sum game, caused by factors such as Black Economic Empowerment, induced fears of expulsion and attack by the “other”, Zimbabwe’s massacre of white farmers being the preferred example of this possibility:

“It is especially for our children’s sake that we cannot surrender. That we must keep on fighting, in the media, in court, and anywhere we can go into lager (orig. *Laer trek*) and protect ourselves against the barbaric onslaught of which the events in Zimbabwe are merely the starter before the main course.”¹¹⁰

(Fourie 2017: 18)

¹¹⁰ In this context Coetzee refers to the slang for chat according to the published play.

This very emotive passage evokes imagery of the *Battle of Bloodrivier* (1838), where a “*laer trek*” was formed to protect the Voortrekkers against the onslaught of the other, the Zulus. The politics of “us” and “them” is used to justify “the fight”. This “fight” mentioned above in Fourie’s play is largely confined to the intellectual sphere, i.e. “the court”, “the media” (Fourie 2017: 18). Whilst Fourie’s play cleverly juxtaposes the uncritical voices with more critical/opposing positions to lend the play more points of view and a critical distance from its subject, Opperman’s *Tree aan!* is in many ways guilty of treating these emotions uncritically, without the counterbalance of the conscript’s culpability. Opperman’s *Tree aan!* is a very overt plight for the forgotten. He writes in the play’s program notes:

“We were relieved of our duties and left to our own devices. Then Freedom Park came and we are told that what we sacrificed on the border counted for nothing, must be forgotten. Easy for a politician to say but how does anyone forget something like this?”
(Opperman 2011: 9)

This question is echoed in the musical when the character of Christo is shot by a SWAPO soldier who ambushes him. Christo also manages to shoot the soldier. Both men die. The lieutenant admonishes the character of Lappies, the villain who had failed to fulfil his duties as the soldier entered their camp when he was supposed to be on guard. The lieutenant orders the conscripts to get rid of the “terrorist’s” body and to cover their fellow soldier, Christo. The characters of Andre and Kosie cover his body with a sleeping bag. The second last song of the musical starts by echoing the question Opperman poses in his production note. It is entitled: “*Wie sal ons onthou?*” (Who will remember us), and the two young soldiers repeat the following refrain whilst standing over their friend’s body:

“Andre & Kosie: Twenty years from now
 Will someone remember us?
 Twenty years from now
 Will someone build a monument?
 All the names –
 Gone like the morning dew
 Twenty years from now,
 Who will remember us?”¹¹¹

¹¹¹Trans. “Andre & Kosie:

Twintig jaar van nou

(Opperman 2012: 91)

Opperman is clearly referring to his political views twenty years after the fact – blaming the ANC government for its exclusion of Border War veterans in Freedom Park. The problematic nature of the song’s theme – that those who died on the Border War have been forgotten – is illustrated in another part of the refrain:

“Andre & Kosie: How much still has to be paid?
 How many still have to die?
 How many boys sown by God
 Killed by human hands?”¹¹²
 (Opperman 2012: 91)

One can gather from the fact that Lappies has carried the SWAPO soldier’s body off stage (Opperman 2012: 90), that the “boys sown by God” are “our boys” and the “human hands” destroying them are the enemy’s. The fact that the only soldiers being mourned are those who fought on the SADF’s side is problematic. Some ambiguity would still have been present had the black body been left on stage to show the victims on both sides of the war. This instance is, unfortunately, a microcosm for what is troubling about Opperman’s *Tree aan!* – its refusal to engage with the conscripts’ participation in a war that had many non-white victims. By removing the black victim from the stage, the play’s political motivations are laid bare: it is clear that in the world of the musical, terrorists are the enemy and young white men are “sown by God” and thus worthy of mourning. Although Opperman’s frustration with the group’s exclusion from national monuments is understandable on some level, his portrayal of veterans as unambiguous victims of terrorist violence is highly problematic.

Sal iemand ons onthou?
 Twintig jaar van nou,
 Wie sal die monument dan bou?
 Wie sal al die name –
 Vergaan soos oggenddou?
 Twintig jaar van nou,
 Wie sal ons onthou?”
 Hoeveel sal nog betaal word?
 Hoeveel sal nog gehaal word?
 Hoeveel seuns deur God gesaai
 Deur mense hande afgemaai?”

¹¹² Trans. “Andre & Kosie:

Tree aan! ends with a screen descending on stage onto which the names of veterans who died on the Border War are projected. While these names are being projected, the musical ends with a song “*Ons sal onthou*” (We will remember) in answer to the one referred to above, “*Wie sal ons onthou?*” (Who will remember us?):

“Ensemble: We will remember
 The names we honour
 When we called ‘Report for duty’
 You reported for duty.”¹¹³
 (Opperman 2012: 91)

Opperman answers the questions posed about remembrance by building a monument in the form of the musical. The stage has become the place where these sacrifices are remembered as he feels the state has failed to do so. The format of the song above and the preceding one, “*Wie sal ons onthou?*” (Who will remember us?), is based on the old national anthem, *Die Stem*. The implicit (one might argue, explicit) message is that the new regime has forgotten these “heroes” and that their sacrifice has gone unnoticed in the new South Africa. The fact that the old flag was included in the production’s set design is, again, very concerning. This contributes greatly to an “us” and “them” narrative that actively opposes any attempt at non-racialism or nation building. The theatre should not seek to build monuments that are static in their view of the past but should seek to actively question simplistic notions of victimhood and perpetration. By using the lived experiences and emotions of veterans – those who feel “Forgotten, Angry, Confused and Endangered” – and portraying this without critically questioning the part these men played in the past, theatre-makers lean dangerously towards emotional exploitation and to the fetishisation of war and violence. Critical thinking and engagement may also be sacrificed in the process.

D: The female perspective

The fact that the exploration of femininity and its relation to patriarchy are such common themes

¹¹³ Trans. “Ensemble: Ons sal onthou
 Die name eer
 Toe ons geroep het ‘Tree aan!’
 het jul aangetree.”

in Border Drama, challenges the definition provided by Van Huyssteen (1998, abstract) in his classification of Border literature and prose. He proposes, “The criterium was that they had to have the South African soldier in South West Africa/Angola as main theme” (Ibid.). In many of the plays reviewed, this soldier as theme is countered with equally central female voices on the periphery of the physical Border. *Die Spinner* (Leach 1984), *Johnny is nie dood nie* (Steyn 2011) and *Bos* (Steyn 2012), explore the effect of the war on those that “stayed behind” or were the loved ones of veterans, most extensively. In *Die Spinner*, Leach finds a way of narrating effectively how the PTSD of Border war veterans has a direct impact on those who stay behind. On his return home Jan has a violent sexual encounter with his wife:

“She opened the door for me
 I placed my duffel bag and my gun next to the door
 She kissed me and asked if I wanted coffee
 Leave the coffee, I told her
 She followed me – hesitantly – and then stood still
 She watched me
 I took her arm and threw her on the bed
 I’m horny, I said
 Don’t you understand – I’m horny, woman
 I bent over her and ripped open her blouse
 Squeezed her lovely breast in my hand
 While pinning her body down under mine
 Her body started to shake under me
 I looked into her eyes
 I saw her crying
 I stood up and walked to the door
 I threw my duffel bag over my shoulder and picked up my gun
 And walked out the door without a saying a word”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Trans. “Sy het die deur vir my oopgemaak

Ek het my balsak en geweer langs die deur neergesit
 Sy het my gesoen en gevra of ek wil koffie het
 Los die koffie, het ek vir haar gesê
 Sy het my gevolg – half huiwerig – en toe stilgestaan
 Sy het na my gekyk
 Ek het haar aan haar arm gevat en haar op die bed neergegooi
 Ek is jags, het ek gesê

(Leach 1985: 80–81)

This passage is striking in that it echoes the language used earlier on in the play when Jan describes his witnessing of a lieutenant's rape of the body of a "young black woman" (Leach 1984: 80):

"The fog of dusk between eyes and teeth of the corpses
And we the living
Saw how the lieutenant walked around
To where the corpse of a young black woman lay
I saw how he bent over her
And how he placed his gun next to him on the ground
And how he struggled with his zipper
It was an old trick of his – the pig"¹¹⁵
(Leach 1985: 80)

As with the lieutenant, Jan "bends over her" (Leach 1985: 80–81) and has violent sex with her. Although, in physical terms, the conscript is able to leave the symbols of war and violence at the door as he enters the domestic space of home – "I placed my duffelbag and my gun next to the door" (Ibid.) – he cannot rid himself of the violence that exists within himself. This leads to the violent sexual encounter described above. Although this theme will be expanded on in the section on PTSD, for the purposes of this section, it is essential to note the effect the veteran's return has

Verstaan jy nie – ek is jags, vrou
Ek het oor haar gehurk en haar bloes oopgeskeur
Haar lieflike bors in my hand gedruk
Terwyl ek haar lyf onder my vaspen
Haar liggaam het begin ruk onder my
Ek het in haar oë gekyk
En gesien dat sy huil
Ek het opgestaan en na die deur toe gestap
My balsak oor my skouer gegooi en my geweer opgetel
En toe sonder 'n woord by die deur uitgeloop"

¹¹⁵ Trans. "Skemer rook tussen oë en tande van die lyke

En ons die lewendes
Het gesien hoe die luitenant omstap
na waar die lyk van 'n jong swart vrou lê
ek het gesien hoe hy oor haar buk
en sy geweer met die opvoukolf langs haar op die grond neersit
en hoe hy met sy gulp sukkel
dit was 'n ou laai van hom – die vark"

on the women in his direct vicinity. Although these women did not physically go to the Border, the psychological impact of a violent war on their partners, husbands and sons means that these women have had to deal with the violence that these men brought back from the Border. The fact that he brings the violence into his own home also raises questions about the effect of perpetrator trauma. The effect of PTSD on the women in his life implies that trauma is not confined to the perpetrator but is shared by those around him – often a female partner.

The character of Anja in *Johnny is nie dood nie* (2011: 58) warns Lise about her affair with Hein, a Border War veteran:

“Anja: (to Lise) Sweetie, Just remember that Hein is an SPCA special: His bite hurts so much because he hurts so much. (...) Hold on to your heart. Hein, I love him but he’s living a search-and-rescue operation.”¹¹⁶

Lise affirms this when she says that it sometimes feels like she is “sharing a bed with a thousand demons” she “can’t name”¹¹⁷ (Steyn 2012: 55). Their refusal to talk about the Border War and the subsequent exclusion of the female characters from the psyche of the veterans who return home Johnny calls, “The horror of being in love with a *grensvegter*” (Steyn 2012: 55). The reality of the Border War in the homes – and even bedrooms – of South African women, has not been explored at length, except for Malan Steyn and Pieter Fourie’s *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* (2017). Interestingly, in the adaptation of his earlier play, *Môre is ’n lang dag* (1986), Deon Opperman includes a female character in *Tree aan!* (2012): Christine. Although the original play is comprised of an all-male cast, the musical was arranged to include some female voices. The play opens with the character of Christine trying to convince her boyfriend not to go to war by delaying his service by first going to university¹¹⁸. As an archetypal “Dear John” letter writer, she fears for his safety and tries to convince him to stay. The musical opens with his decision to reject her feminine sentiments heroically by reporting for his masculine duty:

¹¹⁶ Trans. “Anja: (vir Lise) Sweetie, onthou net Hein is ’n SPCA-special: Hy byt so seer, want hy kry so seer (...) hou vas aan jou hart. Hein, I love him, maar hy leef ’n search-en-destroy-operasie.”

¹¹⁷ Trans. “Lise: En tog ... Partykeer voel dit vir my ek deel ’n bed met ’n duisend demone waaraan ek g’n naam kan gee nie.”

¹¹⁸ Young men had the option of going to university after school which would delay their conscription. Graduates of tertiary institutions were usually given administrative, “office” jobs in the army with the exception of graduate medical doctors who had to serve as medics on the front lines. These jobs were usually degree-specific, e.g. a law graduate would serve as an administrative clerk in a military court, an architecture graduate would serve on building projects etc. Thus, there is a very important distinction between what different classes experienced during the Border War. White collar professionals and graduates, unless they chose to go to university post-conscription, would therefore have been much less likely to see “action” or direct combat. Greig Coetzee illustrates this wonderfully when his character confronts these liberal graduates (probably the majority of his theatre-going audience) in *White Men with Weapons* (2001: 223).

“Christo: No words could ever say what lies before me, it calls me...
 It calls me...
 Folk and fatherland
 Takes me out of mother’s hand...it calls me...”¹¹⁹
 (Opperman 2012: 3)

Already in the first scene, there is an overt rejection of the mother’s (feminine) world and a siding with the fatherland and military values of the masculine. Vasu Reddy (2005: 111) writes that in the masculine environment of the military, one is expected to behave in such a way that totally discards everything associated with femininity or childhood. Krüger (2013: 442) writes that, “The gender constructs in *Tree aan!* (2012), affirm the traditional binary ideas of the distinct gender roles associated with military training”. Christine’s character is probably the biggest culprit in this uncritical treatment of gender and representation of women. She serves her country with loyalty by writing letters to Christo and sings passionately about “wars being fought at home” (Opperman 2012: 3). Krüger (2013: 443) says that this song is evocative of sentimental hits like Rina Hugo’s *Troepie Doepie* or Marie van Zyl’s *Daar’s ’n man op die grens* in which “the female speaker expresses her longing and concern for her husband or boyfriend on the border”. The lyrics portray an “everywoman” ideal of a faithful, pining, letter-writing girlfriend to a heroic soldier. The text implies passivity on the woman’s part, her only “duty” being to stay true to her soldier while he is engaged in active battle. Whilst masculine duty is thus directly linked to action, female duty implies inaction or helplessness in the extreme sense.

“Christine: And just like you I’m hanging on
 to our dreams of being together
 and there where you’re risking it all
 to destroy and conquer the enemy
 you must know my darling,
 I’ll stand next to you in spirit”¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Trans. “Christo: Geen woorde kan ooit sê wat nou hier voor my lê dit roep my...
 Dit roep my...
 Volk en vaderland
 Neem my uit moederhand ... dit roep my ...”

¹²⁰ Trans. “Christine: En net soos jy klou ek vas
 Aan ons saamwees toekomsdrome
 En daar waar jy alles waag,

(Opperman 2012: 3)

Note the above stance is “in spirit” and thus limited to the metaphorical. This is in contrast to her boyfriend’s very literal “risking it all” whilst “destroying and conquering” so that she can be safe at home. One could argue that this depiction is derogatory in its representation of the female perspective. By limiting the female voice to a supportive partner waiting to be rescued by a male soldier, Opperman, unfortunately, engages restorative nostalgia in trying to recreate a past that was never there. This comes across as longing for a time when things were simpler and when women “knew their place”. The racial injustices of the apartheid regime are not merely being skimmed over, but the dangers of the toxic patriarchy that undergirded this. The core issue with the musical’s depiction of women is the singularity of its narrative. There are no other central female characters to counter the voice quoted above. Without other points of view, the depiction of women is limited to one – in this case, quite pathetic – point of view. In contrast to *Tree Aan!* (2012), *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* (2017), highlights the female perspective by emphasizing the different angles of this lens. I would argue that its emphasis on diverging and contradicting narratives possibly moves closer to the truth of women who had – and have – contact with the Border. When the “actress” character recites letters written by South-African citizens about the Border War, the play manages to voice previously silent voices, note the “also” in the speaker’s monologue¹²¹:

“Actress: I, Boetman’s mother, am also livid. For the past 26 years, since the first of my three sons was forced to serve in military conscription. My second son didn’t return. He died in 1977 on the Border.”¹²²
(Fourie 2017: 11)

The actress goes on to voice her disillusionment with the powers that be in their hypocrisy to not send their own children to war: “By 1977, the Border War had been going on for more than ten years, and, to my knowledge, at that stage not one minister’s son had served on the Border.”¹²³

Om die vyand te verslaan
Moet jy weet, my liefeling,
Sal ek in gees langs jou staan”

¹²¹ Although the voices of mothers with sons on the battlefield were glorified by the previous regime, the voice of the mother has largely been absent from plays about the war.

¹²² Trans. “Aktrise: Ek, Boetman se ma, is ook die bliksem in. Die afgelope 26 jaar al, vandat die eerste van my drie seuns verpligte militêre diens moes doen. My tweede seun het nie teruggekom nie. Hy het in 1977 op die grens gesneuwel.”

¹²³ Trans. “Teen 1977 was die grensoorlog al tien jaar aan die gang, en na my wete, was daar tot in daardie stadium nog geen minister se seun op die grens nie.”

(Fourie 2017: 11). Her ultimate disillusionment comes when she realises the futility of the political convictions for which she had to sacrifice her sons:

“Actress: The day Namibia became independent, we couldn’t help but ask “why and for what were our children’s lives sacrificed?””¹²⁴

(Fourie 2017: 12)

Another mother mourns for the son who has returned alive, but as a ghost, a shell of his former self. The plight of the women on the home front who had to welcome back traumatised sons and lovers are encapsulated in the following testimony by the actress portraying Rene Grobbelaar from Windgate, “I saw boys released as so-called hostages from Angola. Came home. Ghostly beings. One mother cries, ‘... this is not my child the way I know him ...’”¹²⁵ (Fourie 2017: 13).

Apart from suffering endured by the mothers of soldiers, the role they played in upholding the values of the society of their day is seen in Christirine Hattingh from Stellenbosch, also played by the actress:

“Actress: I am the mother of three Boetmanne and their father is also a minister (now retired). Families went through hell together when Boetman had to go to an operational area (war zone). On the inside I went crazy with angst over my sons. At night I had panic attacks. Still I want to say to Louw and to all the Boetmans: ‘Big apology guys! As a parent I now realise that we gave you guys the wrong message.’ How badly I’d like to give Chris Louw a hug! I pray that the wounds would heal with time.”¹²⁶

(Fourie 2017: 14–15)

¹²⁴ Trans. “Aktrise: Die dag toe Namibië onafhanklik word, kon ons nie help om met trane in die oë te vra: ‘Waarom en vir wat moes ons kinders se lewens opgeoffer word?’ nie.”

¹²⁵ Trans. “Ek het seuns gesien wat as sogenaamde krygsgevangenes uit Angola losgelaat is. Huistoe gekom. Verdwaasde wesens. Snik een Ma, ‘... dis nie my kind soos ek hom ken nie ...’”

¹²⁶ Trans. “Aktrise: Ek is ma van drie Boetmanne en hulle pa is ook ‘n predikant (nou afgetree). Gesinne het saam deur hel gegaan wanneer Boetman daardie tyd operasionele gebied toe moes gaan. Binne was ek waansinnig van bekommernis oor my (en al die ander) seuns. Snags het ek hewige angsaanvalle gekry. Nogtans wil ek aan Louw en al die Boetmanne sê: ‘Groot ekskuus julle. As ouer besef ek nou dat ons baie keer ons boodskap verkeerd oorgedra het.’ Hoe graag sou ek vir Chris Louw ‘n drukkies wou gee. Ek bid dat die letsels met tyd sal heel.”

This monologue captures something of the Boetman generation's parents' plight. This mother is, in a sense, hampered by her society and fails to raise her son with the right values which ultimately leads to her son's destruction. Apart from the Boetman generation and Louw's plight of disillusionment, the parents of this generation also had to, and has to, deal with the part they played in their son's struggle. However, this mother with her "feminine" sentiments is very quickly put in her place, in a clever edit of letters by Fourie (2017: 15) when Lonkie Mackenzie from Grahamstown reacts to her letter:

"Actress: Christirine Hattingh with her didactic and sentimental little messages to the Boetmanne had me reaching for my barf bag.
When are people like you finally going to realise that people like Chris Louw, and there are many of them, are not going to be silenced by a 'sorry-baby-let-mommy-give-you-a-hug'? Louw has cut open a septic wound that has long been brooding. We now need to sit back, listen, shut up and let the puss flow."¹²⁷

The fact that this letter is performed by the same actress, serves to undercut the emotional nature of the previous voice. By placing the letters alongside each other, Fourie is alienating the audience in a Brechtian fashion by questioning the voices. This forces the audience to remain critical amidst very contradicting statements and sentiments. It is impossible to get caught up in one woman's plight as she is questioned as soon as she stops. This serves to question and critically examine the "woman as victim". Yes, the plight of the archetypal "war mother" is acknowledged, but her unquestioning cooperation is also highlighted in a corrupt system evoking something of Brecht's *Mother Courage*. Her participation in – and honour from – this system is not ignored.

The effects of a militarised, patriarchal society are also shown when Ronel Louw from Moreleta Park writes and, interestingly, it is the actor who gives voice to this woman:

"Actor: The day Mandela walked out of prison, Ounooi knew that she had been brainwashed better than the communists ever could have done. Those *omies*

¹²⁷ Trans. "Aktrise: Christirine Hattingh met haar neerbuigende en soetsappige boodskappies aan die Boetmanne, het my na die braakbakkie laat gryp. Wanneer gaan mense soos sy die kloutjie by die oor kry dat die woede en pyn van mense soos Chris Louw, en daar is baie soos hy, nie met 'n 'groot-ekskuus-julle-kom-gee-vir-mammie-'n-drukke' gestil kan word nie? Louw het 'n abses oopgesteek wat al lankal broei. Nou moet ons terugstaan, luister, bekhou en die etter laat vloei."

that solemnly sat next to her in church (*organ music is heard*) on Sundays, wanted to ban her as she was engaged to a man who was uncertain of his faith and did not want to partake in communion.”¹²⁸

(Fourie 2017: 18–19)

The female perspective in this passage conveys the viewpoint of a young woman who was marked by the old regime by association. She paints a picture of a very pious society, rigid in their protection of old ways. It is interesting that the young man’s refusal to partake in communion, a celebration of sacrifice, is what leads to his excommunication. In this sense, the young man becomes a Christ-like figure having to die young, and innocent, for the sins of those around him. Betrayed by the so-called religious, the older Pharisees ultimately betray this innocent young man. As the traditional church was used as a political weapon during apartheid to justify the Border War, anyone who went against this, experienced a measure of exclusion from society. The young woman, Ronel, becomes a Mary-like archetype as the bystander of an innocent man being tortured by a corrupt society. As with Jesus, this torture leads to his death in his early thirties:

“Actor: Today she understands what her fiancé had to undergo after two years of military training. (*sound of troops marching is heard*) The *omies* had no grace for him. He was a sissy who couldn’t handle the army and they called him up, year after year, for another session of torture to fulfil his duty for the fatherland. It didn’t matter that he was losing his faith and that he didn’t want anything to do with the church, that he would probably end up in hell. The scars of the war did make him commit suicide in his early thirties, however.

(*Dawid – actor – falls*) Where is Ounooi today?”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Trans. “Akteur: Die dag toe Mandela uit die tronk geloop het, het ounooi geweet dat sy deur die jare gebreinspoel is soos die Kommuniste dit nie kon doen nie. Ounooi het toe besef dat sy haar eie regering meer moes gevrees het as die Kommuniste. Daardie omies wat Sondae (*Orrel musiek*) sedig langs haar in die kerk gesit het, wou haar onder sensuur plaas omdat sy verloof was aan ’n man wat geweldige geloofsonsekerheid ervaar het en nie Nagmaal wou gebruik nie.”

¹²⁹ Trans. “Akteur: Vandag verstaan sy waardeur hierdie verloofde moes gaan ná twee jaar van opleiding in die weermag. (Klank van troepe wat marsjeer word gehoor) Vir hom het hierdie omies geen genade gehad nie. Hy was ’n sissie wat nie die weermag kon vat nie en hulle het hom jaar ná jaar vir ’n verdere martelsessie opgeroep om sy plig te kom uitvoer vir volk en vaderland. Maak nie saak dat hy al hoe meer ongelowig geword het en niks meer met die kerk te doen wou hê nie, dat hy dalk in die hel sou beland nie. Die letsels van daardie oorlog het hom wel in sy vroeë dertigerjare laat selfmoord pleeg. (*Dawid val – Stilte*) En waar sit Ounooi vandag?”

(Fourie 2017: 18–19)

Her final question, where she is now or today, speaks to the pain carried by many “bystanders” of this militarised society who, although they never carried or shot a gun, had to pick up the shells afterwards. Professor Christina Landman¹³⁰’s letter is also performed as a plight to the women who had to pick up the pieces after the men had made the mess:

“Actress: There is a new generation of martyrs in South Africa: the white men in their forties. We’re sad with you that you had half a life. But what about the generation of white women who are now forty, who had NO life? As in the times of Hitler and Mussolini and other military dictators. Women had to keep the home fires burning whilst the men were away without being able to own their own property or without being able to get a housing subsidy.”¹³¹

(Fourie 2017: 20)

Landman is clearly very critical of this “generation of martyrs” and chooses very emotive, evocative terms to challenge their politics of victimhood. Her critique of the economic difficulties facing white South African women continues when she charges that “today most Afrikaner¹³² women are badly trained and cannot provide for their families now that their husbands are unemployed”¹³³ (in Fourie 2017: 20). Landman contradicts herself however, when she says in the same breath (letter) that “women today are in work situations where white men of forty are using white women to keep blacks [sic.] out of jobs”¹³⁴ (Fourie 2017: 21), undoing her argument for women being powerless economically. She does, however, manage to challenge Louw’s exclusion of the generation that were co-victims/martyrs, but possibly fails to see her (women’s) co-responsibility for the patriarchal regime she so harshly criticises.

¹³⁰ Prof. Christina Landman is a prominent South African academic and researcher. Her fields of specialisation are Feminist Theology, Oral History and Gender Studies. She also chairs the Research Institute for Theology and Religion.

¹³¹ Trans. “Aktrise: Daar is ‘n nuwe geslag martelaars in Suid-Afrika: die wit manne van in die veertig jaar. Ons is saam met hulle hartseer dat hulle net ‘n halwe lewe gehad het. Maar wat van die geslag wit vroue wat nou in die veertig is, wat omtrent géén lewe gehad het nie? Soos in die tyd van Hitler en Mussolini en ander militêre diktature. Vroue moes die huis instandhou terwyl die manne weg was, sonder dat hulle self eiendom kon besit of behuisingssubsidie kon kry.”

¹³² I presume by ‘Afrikaner’ Landman means white Afrikaners, as coloured Afrikaners did not share in the privilege she critiques.

¹³³ Trans. “... vandag is die meeste Afrikanervroue maar sleg opgelei, en kan hulle nie vir hul gesinne sorg, met dié dat die mans nou sonder werk sit nie.”

¹³⁴ Trans. “Vandag sit ons in werksituasies waarin die wit manne van veertig die wit vroue gebruik om swartes uit poste te hou.”

E: Homosexuality on the Border

Another aspect explored by quite a few of the plays written on the Border War, is the experience of the gay conscripts. The SADF subjected homosexual conscripts to inhumane conversion therapies. This links with the female perspective as the gay conscript is in many ways the heterosexual ideal constructed by the apartheid regime's binary. After Prof. Landman's plight for the pain of Boetman's sisters above, Fourie (2017: 22) lets a gay Boetman answer: "Now I want to ask all those who are now suddenly aware of your own pain, if you ever thought about the pain you inflicted on us 'labelled ones'"¹³⁵? He goes on to criticise the church's stance that "accepts the homosexual but not his/her lifestyle" which, according to him, causes gay men to stay "closeted" (Ibid.). As someone "misled into believing you have to reject yourself at all costs to live hetro" he ends by apologising to his wife and children who had been dragged into "this mess" (Ibid.). It is interesting that this character also, in the style of Louw and with many "buts", chooses to apologise to those whom his choices have affected.

In Reddy's (2005: 111) overview of three plays written on the Border War, *Môre is 'n lang dag* (1986), *Somewhere on the border* and *White men with weapons*, he writes that these plays manage to pose pertinent questions about sexual orientation. His exploration of the texts includes a discussion of the Border not only as a physical space or "line" but also as a meeting point of ever-shifting binaries, "a kind of 'between and betwixt' condition" (Little 2003: 4). He also notes that all three texts suggest that the old SADF was a "patriarchal world where... a certain gender regime counted within this heteronormative man's world". Homosexuality is seen as a risk, as a feminine soldier is a threat not only to the safety of the group, but also to the ideal of masculinity associated with the army (Reddy 2005: 115). This homophobia manifests most distinctly in characters (both hetero- and homosexual) wanting to avoid behaviour (in themselves and others) that would in any way give them away as "being gay". "Turn off that gay music!"¹³⁶ (1986: 19) is heard when Christo listens to classical music in Opperman's *Môre is 'n lang dag* (1986). It is interesting to note that this topic is not explored in the less critical musical adaptation, *Tree Aan!* (2012). Although the original play is quite critical of this exclusionary masculine world (also with regards to the

¹³⁵ Trans. "Nou wil ek aan al diegene wat nou so bewus is van hul eie seerkry, vra of julle al gedink het aan al die seer wat baie van julle ons 'ge-labeldes', aangedoen het?"

¹³⁶ Trans. "Sit af daai moffie musiek."

objectification of women), the musical ignores this aspect and completely “sanitises” the soldier’s language.

In Steyn’s *Johnny is nie dood nie* (2011: 56), a short exchange between Lise and Johnny reveals the taboo nature of homosexuality in the old regime where even the best of friends had to hide their orientation:

“Johnny: It’s a pretty shit deal that you had to fall in love with Hein, hey?
 Lise: Old Johnny... You’re the only one who knows. (*how bad it is*)
 Johnny: (*caught out*) What? What do you mean?
Lise kisses him.
 Lise: Night, Johnnyboy.
 Johnny: Night, Mary-Ellen.”¹³⁷

The character’s hidden identity is given a further layer by Steyn as a large part of the play’s intrigue is centred on the fact that Johnny was an informant to the secret police of the apartheid era. His fears of having to serve on the Border is amplified by the horrors gay men underwent during their conscription should they be ousted. In Greig Coetzee’s *White men with weapons* (2001), the corporal asks soldiers the following:

“O yes another thing. One more thing: Those of you who think you’re gay, write it on the form, it’s all confidential.”¹³⁸
 (Coetzee 2001: 209)

This comment alludes to the malpractices by the SADF in their treatment of homosexual conscripts, as discussed in the section on *Moffie*. Perhaps the most candid text written about homosexuality and the Border is the character of Ruhr Labuschagne in Coetzee’s *White men with*

¹³⁷ Trans. “Johnny: Dis maar ’n kak deal om juis op Hein te moet verlief raak, nè?
 Lise: Ou Johnny ... Jy’s die enigste een wat wéét. (*hoe erg dit is*)
 Johnny: (*voel uitgevang*) Wat? Wat bedoel jy?
Lise soen hom.
 Lise: Nag, John-Boy.
 Johnny: Nag, Mary-Ellen.”

¹³⁸ Trans. “O ja, nog iets. One more thing: Die van julle wat dink julle’s gay, skryf dit op die vorm, dis alles confidential.”

weapons (2001). Coetzee's (2001: 218) description of Ruhr is very different to the "closeted" Johnny:

"Ruhr Labuschagne is a camp oasis in a desert of testosterone. His constant sarcasm and open homosexuality are, miraculously, tolerated. This is, perhaps, because even the straight boys in the barracks find him quite a pleasant surrogate for female company in an all-male environment. His campness is also rough-edged and he has the laugh of a hard-bitten streetwalker. He speaks with a 'hot-potato' Afrikaans accent and he is a hopeless flirt."

This very "camp" character exhibits stereotypical gay traits and directly confronts the masculine space in which he finds himself. His otherness is highlighted by his irritation with the emblems of masculinity so popular with his fellow soldiers:

"You're not going to watch the rugby? Thank God, I was beginning to think I was the only one who was normal around here. Die res van die camp sit voor die TV en hulle kyk rugby. Wah, wah, wah! Barbare."

This obsession with rugby and sport was (is) so interwoven with the white Afrikaner that some claim the sport boycott was the final straw that broke the apartheid camel's back.¹³⁹ By calling his fellow soldiers "barbarians" (barbare) he is othering himself from this hyper-masculine culture of rugby and beer. Although the character's monologue never hints at the experiments and torture homosexual men underwent during conscription, Korporaal's statement earlier looms over this young man's head. The audience knows with a keen sense of dramatic irony what the character does not. Coetzee leaves enough room for the character to breathe, however, in the sense that his experience of this "desert of testosterone" might have made him an exception to the rule as a gay man who had a wonderful time as a "surrogate" for women in this hyper-masculine environment. It is this type of individual narrative that sometimes manages to cut into a singular narrative of a group of people (e.g. all gay men were tortured, all Afrikaner men love rugby) when set against

¹³⁹ For an extensive overview of rugby and its role in white Afrikaner culture see:

"Playing for power? Rugby, Afrikaner nationalism and masculinity in South Africa, c.1900–70" (Grundlingh 1994)

For a history of the sport boycott and the reasons for its effectiveness in South Africa see:

"'Not Cricket': The Effects and Effectiveness of the Sport Boycott" (Black 1999)

conflicting accounts from the other characters, as this enables it to sketch a nuanced representation of a marginalised group of conscripts.

F: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

One of the motifs most commonly found in the Border War drama oeuvre is that of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) and its effects on veterans and their families. The play that speaks most concretely about this theme is Leach's *Die Spinner* (1984). As mentioned in the play's overview, large parts of the play take place in a mental health facility. The fact that the author writes in his introduction that the play should be read/seen as "a collection of fragments as a psychological case" (1984: 72) affirms the author's intent to explore the psychological impact of the Border War on some conscripts. The conscript is in this facility, presumably because of suffering from PTSD after his conscription service. The play starts off with a monologue in which the main character, Jan, describes the psychiatric hospital he is in:

"The first two weeks you get a headache
Because the place is so different – so weird
...
the company is interesting
everyone has a different story
some I've hear before
I miss a woman
I pray a lot
I engage
At night people have to drink pills so they can fall asleep
The dosage depends on the degree of their normality"¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Trans. "Die eerste twee weke kry 'n mens 'n hoofpyn

Omdat die plek so anders – so snaaks is

...

die geselskap is interessant

elkeen het 'n ander storie

party het ek al gehoor

ek mis 'n vrou

ek bid baie

ek skakel in

Saans moet die mense hulle pille drink sodat hulle kan slaap

Die hoeveelheid na gelang van die graad van hul normaliteit"

(Leach 1985: 73)

This is juxtaposed by the scenes about military action on the Border as if to explain how Jan has gotten to this place. Some of these scenes include descriptions of events witnessed that could lead to the development of PTSD as described in Chapter Two. He witnesses the killing of the enemy and describes an encounter with a body of one of the slain enemies:

“There is a body close to me of which half of its skull has been
Blasted away
I walk closer and bend over to look
The inside of the cranium is a soft pink
With folds of velvet like a sea anemone
Steam is coming out of it
I touch it
It is soft and warm”¹⁴¹
(Leach 1985: 78)

This scene is followed directly with a simple domestic scene in which Jan has returned from the Border and is making breakfast:

“During the time it took for the sausages and eggs to
Fry on the stove
While the coffee was brewed...
And I only saw the skyscrapers on the horizon
Fat splattered onto my new red and white shirt
The smell made me want to scream and vomit”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Trans. “Daar lê ’n lyk naby my waarvan die helfte van die skedel
weggeblaas is
ek loop nader en buk om te kyk
die binnekant van die cranium is sagte-pienk
met voue van fluweel soos ’n see-anemoon
die stoom trek daaruit
ek voel daaraan
dit is sag en warm”

¹⁴² Trans. “In die tyd waarin die eiers en die worsies
Op die stoof gaar geraak het
En die koffie deurgebrou het

(Leach 1985: 79)

The scenario above is typical of PTSD in that the sufferer cannot avoid reliving flashbacks and strong reactions to events that remind him of the traumas he has witnessed or participated in. The fat from the frying meat is being juxtaposed with the description of the corpse he had seen in the previous scene. This is escalated even more when Jan returns to the Border after a break and witnesses the rape of a corpse by his lieutenant as described in the section on “the female perspective”. After this, he has a violent sexual encounter with his partner and cannot separate the violence he experienced on the Border with his civilian life. He sings a translation of Pink Floyd’s *Brain Damage* again alluding to the PTSD he struggles with after the events he both witnessed and participated:

“You lock the door
Threw away the key
There’s someone in my head
But it’s not me
And when the cloud breaks thunderously in your ears
You scream – but no one seems to hear”¹⁴³
(Leach 1985: 79)

The helplessness and isolation these lyrics embody are echoed in Jan’s final monologue that brilliantly captures the effect trauma has on its survivors – hypervigilance, hypersensitivity and the inability to stop reliving the events that led to their PTSD. He starts off by describing a sort of honeymoon period after the conscript has returned home in which he is too distracted to notice the effect the war has had on him:

“And they come back from a place which they may not identify

En ek die oë oorkant die tafel vermy het
En net die wolkekrabbers op die horison raakgesien het
Het daar vet op my nuwe rooi en wit gestrepte hemp gespat
Ek wou skreeu en kots van die reuk”

¹⁴³ Trans. “Jy sluit die deur

Gooi weg die sleutel
Daar’s iemand in my kop
Maar dis nie ek nie
En as die wolk donderend in jou ore breek
Skreeu jy – maar niemand skyn te hoor nie”

Where they did things they're not allowed to talk about

...

and they're partly drugged by the dream of freedom

and they're filled with lust

and they want a lay"¹⁴⁴

(Leach 1985: 82)

This period of distraction quickly comes to an end as Jan's monologue ends with a very sombre description of the realities of soldiers returning to their civilian lives:

"A short while ago they jumped out at night

Into a foreign African state

and everyone was a god that could decide about life and death

and they walk on sidewalks that are lit by neon streetlights

and they wait to step on a landmine

or to hear an explosion

or a round of machine gun fire

they are ready for action

the war endures

and many things they were taught

they cannot remember

sometimes they can't even – remember their own names"¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Trans. "En hulle kom terug na 'n plek wat hulle nie mag identifiseer nie

Waar hulle dinge gedoen het waaroor hulle nie mag praat nie

...

En hulle is gedeeltelik bedwelm deur die droom van vryheid

En hulle is jags

En hulle soek lê"

¹⁴⁵ Trans. "en kort gelede het hulle oor 'n vreemde Afrika-staat

in die nag afgespring

en elkeen was 'n god wat kon besluit oor lewe en dood

en hulle loop op sypaadjies wat deur neon- en straatlampe verlig is

en hulle wag om 'n landmyn af te trap

of 'n ontploffing te hoor

of 'n sarsie masjiengeweevuur

hulle is gereed vir aksie

die oorlog duur voort

en baie dinge wat lank gelede vir hulle geleer is

kan hulle nie meer onthou nie

(Leach 1985: 82)

The veterans carry the threats of war into their civilian lives. Even though they are not in the bush anymore, they still feel the threat of landmines or machineguns. They have left the things they've learnt in childhood behind and have been given new identities. Trauma is now a part of who they are as the war endures in their mind even after they return from the Border. *Die Spinner* (1984) is an incredibly relevant play as it highlights the effect of a violent war on the individual's mental health. The fact that Leach wrote this play while the war was still going on, makes it somewhat prophetic as it predicts the many cases of PTSD that would be reported on.

Another play that deals with the effects of PTSD that was also written during the ongoing war, is Akerman's *Somewhere on the Border* (2012).

The play that shows the effects of PTSD after the war most vividly is *Johnny is nie dood nie* (Steyn, 2011). One of the main characters, Anja (a journalist), mentions in the play that she did an interview with a "shrink" who estimates that about 80 000 white men suffer from PTSD "because of that fucking border"¹⁴⁶ (Steyn 2011: 49). Another character in the play, Hein, is continuously plagued by a typical symptom of PTSD, recurring nightmares, in which he relives his days on the Border. As a student at Stellenbosch University, he cannot escape his after-school experiences on the Border. His girlfriend, Lise, is a scholar in the "soft sciences" (psychology), and Hein is very resistant to her efforts to make him "talk through his pain" as seen in the following scene:

"Hein and Lise are sleeping together. Hein has a nightmare.

Hein: Twenty pieces, six bags ... four pieces, two bags ... a head per bag ... too heavy, out ... here's yours ... every bag a head ... there's no fucking space here ... you ...

Lise: *(waking him)*: Hein ... Hein!

Hein: *(sits up awake)*: I can't fucking HELP YOU!

Lise : Shhh, it's okay, Hein.

Hein is still unsure of where he is.

Lise: It's a dream, it's just a dream."

Hein: Fuck.

partymaal kan hulle nie eers – hulle name onthou nie"

¹⁴⁶ Trans. "Nou die dag 'n interview gedoen met 'n shrink wat sê 80 000 wit mans ly vandag aan PTSD oor daai fokken grens."

Lise: It's just a dream."¹⁴⁷
(Steyn 2011: 51)

Hein's nightmares are a prevalent symptom of PTSD in which the sufferer is re-experiencing the trauma he witnessed whilst in battle. Hein, a war veteran, is struggling to cope with the events he witnessed on the Border. The irony in Lise's line that it is "just a dream" is of course that, for PTSD sufferers, their dreams more often than not are anything but dreams; they are re-livings of their traumatic past. Lise naively tries to coax him into disclosing what had happened on the Border:

"Lise: Are you okay?
Hein: Did I make a noise?
Lise: Yes.
Hein: Fuck.
Lise: Are you okay?
Hein: Yes. Just go to bed.
Lise: Hein ... What happened?
Hein: It was a dream.
Lise: What happened ... on the Border?
Hein: There was a war. Now go to bed.
Lise: Talk to me!
Hein: It's fucking late!
Lise: You have to talk to someone ...
Hein: God ...
Lise: Johnny's call-up...it triggered things again.

¹⁴⁷Trans. "*Hein en Lise slaap saam. Hein het 'n nagmerrie.*

Hein: Twintig stukke, ses sakke ... vier stukke, twee sakke ... 'n kop per sak ... te swaar, uit ... hier's joune ... elke sak
'n kop ... hiers'ie fokken plek nie ... jy ...
Lise: (*skud hom wakker*): Hein ... Hein!
Hein: (*skrik wakker*): Ek kan jou nie fokken HELP NIE!
Lise: Sjj, dis oukei, Hein.
Hein is nog onseker waar hy is.
Lise: Dis 'n droom, net 'n droom...
Hein: Fok.
Lise: Dis net 'n droom."

- Hein: Good God Lise, if you want to practise your Psychology 202, try Dirk ... then you can work on his abandonment issues.
- Lise: Every time I think now you're tame ... you bite me.
- Hein: I'm not your pet, and you're not mine. God! The last thing on earth anyone needs is to be tamed."¹⁴⁸
- (Steyn 2011: 52–53)

Hein's refusal to participate in Lise's attempts at a discussion alludes to a common thread in Border War literature, namely a refusal to be "fixed" by psychology. In order to understand this phenomenon, one has to understand the absolute patriarchy and masculine ideals that underscored the apartheid regime. Any hint of gentleness or sensitivity was squashed as a sign of weakness. Greig Coetzee's *White men with weapons* (2001), illustrates this refusal to deal with conscripts holistically as emotional beings when Kaptein Marais warns conscripts against filling in anything that might resemble emotional instability (Coetzee 2001:209):

"The last form is for any emotional and/or family problems you'd like us to know about. Do not think that just 'cause I am a social worker I'm going to believe any kak you dish up to me. Geen fokken soebat stories, hoor. Ek is te moeg daarvoor."¹⁴⁹

-
- ¹⁴⁸ Trans. "Lise: Is jy oukei?
 Hein: Het ek geraas?
 Lise: Ja.
 Hein: Fok.
 Lise: Is jy oukei?
 Hein: Ja. Slaap net.
 Lise: Hein ... Wat het gebeur?
 Hein: Dit was 'n droom.
 Lise: Wat het gebeur ... op die grens?
 Hein: Daar was 'n oorlog. Slaap nou.
 Lise: Praat met my.
 Hein: Dis fokken nag.
 Lise: Jy moet met iemand praat.
 Hein: Jirr ...
 Lise: Johnny se oproepinstruksies ... Dit het dinge weer ge-trigger.
 Hein: Jirre God, Lise, as jy jou fokken Sielkunde 202 wil oefen, probeer vir Dirk ... Dan werk julle aan sy abandonment issues.
 Lise: Elke keer as ek dink nou's jy mak vir my, dan byt jy.
 Hein: Ek's nie jou troeteldier nie, en jy's nie myne nie. Gods, die laaste ding op aarde wat 'n mens nodig het, is om mak gemaak te word"

¹⁴⁹ Trans. "No fucking sob stories. I tired of all that."

Whilst in a martial court setting, one of the characters in *White men with weapons* (Coetzee 2001), explains how he, along with a compatriot, killed an Indian woman whilst on Township Duty. He explains the man's state of mind as being "a bit bosbefok"¹⁵⁰:

"Stompie takes off the petrol cap. Tunes he's going to burn her if she doesn't shut up. But he's bluffing, that's all, just bluffing. Doesn't want to burn her. Doesn't want to burn Tony's car. He's got his lighter in his hand, but he's bluffing. Bluffing.

But ok, like I say, he's a bit wild, a bit drunk, a bit bosbefok. Maybe there's a spark from the lighter, you know, and like fumes from the tank, 'cause the next thing we know, it's alight. It catches, the cars on fire, burning, burning, burning. The coolie girl's screaming, but it's burning. It's too big, too big, too late, there's nothing we can do! Nothing we can do."

(Coetzee 2001: 218)

The post-traumatic stress Coetzee writes about in his play is immediate as it manifests itself whilst the war was still ongoing. Whereas Malan is more concerned with the after-effects of the war on its veterans, Coetzee's character explains how a fellow soldier's traumatised state led to his brutal murder of a young woman. The plays above highlight different aspects of PTSD and the experience of conscription. I found it interesting to note that the characters suffering from PTSD are mostly young men. The lasting effect of PTSD would be worthwhile exploring in writing a play about the Border War.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of the lineage of practice in the field of Border War dramas. It falls into the part of the research process that aims to "develop, interpret and synthesise new data or ideas" (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). Its "output" was a thematic analysis or "critical account" (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) in the form of a thematic analysis of themes common to the dramas analysed in the lineage of practice. After contextualising Border literature in the canon I proceeded to draw up a rough timeline of the Border dramas performed both before and after the war. The significant themes identified in the dramas about the Border war were grouped in the following manner:

¹⁵⁰ "Bosbefok" is a slang term describing PTSD caused by serving on the Border.

- A. Generation gap
- B. Fathers and sons
- C. Forgotten, angry, confused and endangered (FACE)
- D. The female perspective
- E. Homosexuality on the Border
- F. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

I feel the critical analysis of these themes and aspects explored in the plays has equipped me with a better understanding and grounding in the subject matter. One of the more important aspects that I will derive from the research done in this chapter has less to do with “what” plays presented, than with “how” these plays were presented. The plays discussed in this chapter can be seen as “markers of time” (Reddy 2005: 109) as they clearly reflect changing notions of cultural identity and the shifting significations attached to signs of the times in which they were written. Whilst the perspectives of the various texts differ, even these divergent values reflect something of a collective’s stance on the issues represented in each text. Opperman’s *Tree aan!*, whilst clearly having a very overt political agenda, reflects a very real stream of thought in the white Afrikaner collective. This trend can be seen in Fourie’s *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* (2017) as these voices are also given the opportunity to speak. The difference between the two plays, however, is that whilst Fourie’s text questions and prods at these voices, Opperman represents them sympathetically and, one might argue, without nuance. In portraying the Border War, it is vital that the events are framed in a way that challenges the audience’s memories by avoiding dangerous nostalgia about a dubious past.

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSES ON THE BORDER WAR

Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were.

-Marcel Proust

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 will also aim to “develop, interpret and synthesise new data or ideas” (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) but differently to Chapter 3. This will again lead to an “output” as a thematic analysis is a “critical account” which includes new “ideas” about this data. This chapter will involve discourse analysis of the comments on the Facebook group “GRENDOORLOG / Border War 1966–1989”. This process returns to the start of the iterative cyclic web (Ibid.) as it involves the phase of again selecting an approach and ideas to explore. This involves also choosing which ideas and themes to leave out of the discussion in selecting which discourses to include and which to exclude. I will identify themes Border War veterans engage with online and compare them with those found in the plays written about the Border War in the previous chapter. Before this discourse analysis will take place, however, an overview of the field of online discourse analysis will be given. I will also outline the specific frameworks I will be employing to analyse the material found online.

I will mainly be relying on qualitative e-research as a methodology to analyse certain Facebook texts that commemorate, remember and celebrate the Border War in this chapter. This will allow me to outline the contemporary discourse surrounding the Border War. It will also provide me with themes and topics as a point of departure for discussing plays created post-1989. One can, therefore, use these online texts as a sort of mirror to compare the likeness of performances discussed in the third chapter to the contemporary concerns and collective memory of the Border War veterans.

I will be employing “cultural models” (Gee 2001: 58) as tools of inquiry when analysing the online texts. They are essential because “they mediate between the ‘micro’ level of interaction and the

‘macro’ level of institutions” (Ibid.). They also “mediate between the local interactional work we do (...) and Discourses as they operate to create the complex patterns of institutions and cultures across societies and history” (Ibid.). “Cultural models” allow the following questions:

- “What cultural models are relevant here?
- Are there differences here between the cultural models that are affecting espoused beliefs and those that are affecting actions and practices? What sorts of cultural models, if any, are being used here to make value judgments about oneself or others?
- How consistent are the relevant cultural models? Are there competing or conflicting cultural models at play? Whose interests are the cultural models representing?
- What other cultural models are related to the ones most active? Are there “master models” at work?
- What sorts of texts, media, experiences, interactions, and/or institutions could have given rise to these cultural models?
- How are the relevant cultural models here helping to reproduce, transform, or create social, cultural, institutional, and/or political relationships? What discourses and conversations are these cultural models helping to reproduce, transform, or create?”

I will also use the method of discourse analysis employed by Steyn (2004: 150) in her overview of the “white talk” found in post-apartheid South Africa. Using Laclau and Mouffe’s theorisation on discourse (Ibid.), I have adapted the following questions to keep in mind when analysing the discourse found online:

- Which meanings are established by signifiers in ways that exclude other possibilities available to the society?
- Which meanings are being reproduced without contestation?
- Which subject positions are being constructed?
- Which myths of society are championed?
- How are groups imagined in this mythology?

(Adapted from Steyn 2004; Billig 1996; Phillips & Jorgensen 2002).

I will also be using these questions to determine which Facebook comments and groups to include in this analysis. This is, of course, a crucial part of the iterative cyclic web: choosing what data to include and what to exclude. Steyn’s (2004: 150) final level of analysis attempted to “show how

the discourse operates to achieve a strategic/rhetorical function within the social space out of which, and into which, it speaks in competition with antagonistic attempts to articulate the social” (Billig, 1996; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). This level is also applicable to my study as it is important to look at the reasons behind the strong political undercurrents and the (real or imagined) enemies that faced- and is facing the men (and women) on social media groups.

Within the field of discursive psychology, social identity theory (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002: 112) will also be used when analysing groups on Facebook. Social identity theory emphasizes that “conflict between groups has roots in particular social and historical contexts” (Ibid.). Its aim “is to determine what happens to people’s identity and their evaluations, perceptions and motivations when they interact within a group” (Ibid.). This also links with the research on collective trauma and how this manifests on stage which I reflected on in Chapters 2 and 3.

By telling stories about trauma, we may “partly achieve a certain ‘working through’ for the victim” (Kaplan 2005: 37). Kaplan further notes that this may “permit a kind of empathetic ‘sharing’ that moves us forward, if only by inches”¹⁵¹. In a country still struggling with the after-effects of segregation more than twenty years after apartheid, the theatre may help to promote healing in the present by dealing with the past. I will attempt to write a play that deals with the effect of the Border War’s “stories about trauma” (Ibid.) that reflects the themes that will arise from the online discourses which will be analysed as part of the study. Because these discourses will deal mainly with the memory of trauma and not the immediate trauma itself, the play will also deal with the effect the war has had on the children of Border War veterans.

4.2 Qualitative e-research and Social media discourse Analysis

Qualitative e-research is “an umbrella term used to describe methodological traditions for using information and communication technologies to study perceptions, experiences or behaviours through their verbal or visual expressions, actions or writings” (Salmons 2016: 6). Online communication options fall into three broad categories: “One-to-one”, “One-to-Many” and “Many-to-Many” (Salmons 2016: 4). Social networking sites and “comment areas” fall under the

¹⁵¹ It should be noted that Kaplan’s theorisation of a Freudian notion of the retelling of the trauma being central to a “working through” process is not a view that is held by all modern trauma theorists. This diversion in Trauma studies is discussed at length in Chapter 2 under the subtitle, “Questioning Trauma”.

“Many-to-Many” category.¹⁵² Traditional qualitative data collection was classified by the method employed to collect the material: interviews, observations and documents or archival analysis. Solomon (2016: 7) proposes an adapted categorisation for data collected online. She proposes categorising the methods used according to the extent of the researchers’ involvement in the material obtained. These categories are: extant, elicited and enacted (Ibid.). For the purpose of this study, extant research will be carried out. This entails studies done using “existing materials developed without the researcher’s influence” to ask questions about “How ... people express themselves or describe their worlds in the writings, images or media they post?” (Ibid.: 9).

Any Facebook account holder can start a group of nearly any kind where “discussions are conducted in a less guarded way than other social spaces” (Burke & Goodman 2012: 4). Although some studies suggest that computer mediated language (CML) can lead to ‘deindividuation’, where online users are more prone to use politically incorrect or extreme language “to argue and insult” (Goodman & Speer 2007: 165), other studies have shown that on Facebook “people can engage in civil interactions when discussing politics in CML”¹⁵³ (Burke & Goodman 2012: 4). This could be courtesy of the way that Facebook limits anonymity by showing the user’s name and profile picture when they comment (Ibid.). Other online forums and chatrooms use pseudonyms when controversial topics are discussed.¹⁵⁴

When examining the group’s interactions, it is useful to keep the theories of Erving Goffman (1959) in mind. As a sociologist, Goffman employs the Shakespearean metaphor that “all the world’s a stage” as a frame from which to analyse individuals’ social interactions. This analysis using theatrical terms such as “actors” and “the stage”, advances the notion that individuals are all “actors” putting forward different masks as they interact with different “audiences” or communities. This dramaturgical metaphor has become “sociology’s second skin” and has made

¹⁵² A note on my translations of the online material: I have tried, whenever possible, to include the language errors and the lack of punctuation marks in my translations of the phrases into English. I felt the absence (mostly) of proper sentence structures and correct grammar at times serves to sketch the speaker’s profile. The extent to which web-based language is used is also an important signifier that can provide insights about the speaker. I also did not want to draw conclusions about the speakers’ intended meaning as this would compromise their (and my) integrity. However, as with most translations, a lot inevitably gets lost in the process of translation. The translations should thus merely serve as an aid to the English reader and should not be seen as a replacement of the primary text. While analysing the group, it should be noted that I did this as an Afrikaans speaker and reader myself. When referring to the material employed, the reader should, if possible, use the original Afrikaans transcript as reference. I have also decided to use “screenshots” of the various Facebook posts I will be using in the document as this gives the reader a better understanding of the threads and interactions. Where relevant, the “likes” are also available to provide further insight into the group’s interaction.

¹⁵³ See Kushin, M. & Kitchener, K. 2009. “Getting political on network sites: Exploring online political discourse on Facebook”. *First Monday* 14.11.

¹⁵⁴ *Reddit* is a famous example of this.

Goffman “arguably the most influential sociologist of the twentieth century” (Fine & Manning 2003: 34). Apart from the sociologist’s obvious relevance of the world of theatre and art as a microcosmos for “the real world”, his work is uniquely suited to this study as he regularly cites “literature as source material” and displays a “deft metaphorical touch” (Ibid.: 42). Whilst this style of theorisation is not unique to Goffman and can regularly be seen in the works of Jung and Freud, Goffman is unique for using these stylistic devices to “question orthodox methodological approaches” (Ibid.). Goffman had a “passion for a comparative qualitative sociology” which aimed to “produce generalisations about human behaviour” (Ibid.: 43). Whilst I might not go as far as to deduce universal truths from this technological observation and analysis, I would like to employ Goffman’s method of grouping specific themes which come to the fore when observing the Facebook participants’ “presentation of self”.

Goffman’s most famous work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), can be seen as a “handbook of action” which contains six distinct dramaturgical themes: performance, team, region, discrepant roles, communication out of character and impression management. Goffman writes that an individual’s public performance is something which occurs on a “front stage” which constructs a “view of the world for the benefit of the public audience” (Fine & Manning 2003: 46). In a “backstage” area, individuals may “knowingly contradict themselves” (Goffman 1959: 114). Manning (1992: 4–8) explains this phenomenon as a “two selves thesis”, wherein the one self “is a public performer with carefully managed impressions and the second self is a cynical manipulator hidden behind the public performance” (Fine & Manning 2003: 46). Social media is by its very nature a crude example of the individual’s public performance. Sannicolos (1997, online) observed various special interest groups (SIG’s) on chatroom platforms online and said that “mostly people come on portraying themselves, not necessarily ... as they truly are, but as they would like to be, or at least how they would like others to see them.” She further states:

“These SIG chat rooms become social support networks for many, similar in many ways to the social science concept of protective communities. Although this is often viewed as deviant by society, it can in fact be a very positive experience. There are people within these SIG’s who for whatever reason do not interact much with people in real life. This may be because of the hours they work (i.e. someone working the night shift who sleeps during the day), a physical disability that leaves them home-bound, extreme shyness in social situations, a lack of social skills, or even mental disorders such as agoraphobia.”
(Sannicolos 1997, online)

Sannicolos' article, published online in 1997 by Cybersociology, was written just before the onslaught of social media which exploded in 2004 with the launch of Facebook. Preceded by smaller sites such as Myspace, Zuckerberg's platform, and followed later by other platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, Facebook created an opportunity for SIGs from around the world to have their say and perform their personal fears and hopes on a very public stage. This is exemplified in the group "GRENSOORLOG / Border War 1966–1989".

4.3 (Media)ting Memory on Social Media

The performance of memory was discussed in the previous chapter as a means of negotiating a master narrative of conscription in the context of performance and theatre. However, how this memory is created, is another matter. Although the recollection and subsequent creation and recreation of memory – collective and individual – might be interwoven with the process of its performance (see for instance Akerman's experience of a spy in his rehearsals [2012: xvi]), the collective memory is usually formed in other spheres of life that run parallel to, or intersect with, these performances. The theatre should, hopefully, reflect these spheres by holding up "a mirror to life" while still examining the flaws in the mirror and of the holder thereof. In her thesis on the post-apartheid legacies of military conscription, Theresa Edlmann (2014: 99) uses Edna Lomsky-Feder's (2004) work on Israeli ex-conscripts as a framework against which to discuss the narratives told about the Border War. Lomsky-Feder (2004: 82) describes the contested and 'troubled' social spaces in which narratives about war are constructed as 'memory fields'. Lomsky-Feder (2004: 2) contests that within the "memory field" of war, the concentration of "studies that investigate the nature of personal remembrance of war" is on "psychological aspects, with an emphasis on their supposedly universal traumatic elements". But, according to Lomsky-Feder (Ibid.), this is in itself a "created" cultural product "constructed after World War II and reinforced since the Vietnam War". She goes on to make the assertion that this type of research largely focusses on the destructive nature of war whilst ignoring other important aspects of war also associated with the phenomenon in the collective. She writes about this alternative image of war:

"... this cultural (destructive) image is invariably accompanied by another image – namely, the image of the heroic soldier, according to which war enables the soldier to realise his masculinity to the highest possible degree and to actualise supreme values of human existence, such as personal sacrifice for the sake of the greater good."

(Lomsky-Feder 2004: 2)

She is also critical of memory studies that try to frame it as a social product conceived in the collective – a national memory – as this ignores the individual’s narrative:

“Conceiving of national memory as a result of either negotiation or struggle among different groups and interests over the national narrative, these critical works hardly relate to the individual – the remembering subject – who also operates within the social memory field.”

(Lomsky-Feder 2004: 3)

She divides existing literature on national memory along two axes: “assimilation of personal memory into the collective” and “the search for an authentic and counter voice” (Lomsky-Feder 2004: 3). She is not satisfied with either approach and notes that neither is sufficient to provide “a satisfactory answer with regard to the remembering subject as an agent who creates his own world but at the same time is bounded to a memory field that is socially framed” (Ibid.). The relationship between the creation and formation of national memory and the shaping of the individual’s memory is neither a simplistic nor a linear process and has multiple co-creators:

“Collective memories are created in different mnemonic communities (family, local community, comrades) (Winter & Sivan 1999; Zerubavel 1996) and rooted in various social recourses such as generational experiences (Mannheim 1972) or the organisational recollection of the army.”

(Lomsky-Feder 2004: 3)

The process of the formation of collective memories is influenced by specific hegemonic processes and power structures outlined in the foundational work on discourse and power by Michel Foucault (1965; 1970; 1972)¹⁵⁵. Lomsky-Feder’s description above includes the organisational recollection of the army as a hegemonic structure of meaning (2004: 3). This organisational recollection on the army’s part is especially relevant to the study. In the case of the Border War, there is no official memorial site for the casualties of the SADF during this period. In fact, the SADF’s Memorial Park has explicitly excluded these casualties from this national memorial site. Deon Opperman’s

¹⁵⁵ See: *Madness and Civilization* (1965), *The Archaeology of knowledge* (1972) & *The Order of Things* (1975).

Tree Aan! (2011) was created as a reaction to this, attempting to be a “living memorial” in the absence of a physical site (Krüger 2013: 419).

Humphrey (2002: 47) writes that the “legacies of war persist in private memory as trauma, physical scars and gross bodily deformities” which are “turned into collective memories through commemoration in war memorials, war memoirs, literature, family biography and archived testimonies”. This definition of the process of collective memory formation is possibly more formalised than the more personal process described by Lomsky-Feder (2004: 3), and hinges more on text and the physical “museum space” as set out by Walter Benjamin. In contrast to this, Lomsky-Feder’s description emphasises the intangible, non-physical aspects of memory. Whilst Humphrey (2002: 47) notes that “not all victims are publicly acknowledged”, the question as to whom this “victimhood” belongs, remains to be answered. He writes that “those defeated have the meaning of their injuries and losses overturned, their legacy of injury evidence of the other’s victory” (Ibid.). Again this concession emphasises the veteran’s physical injury without taking into account emotional casualties. His definition describes what happens to these voices if they are not heard or acknowledged. Rothberg (2009: 6) writes that “today’s ‘losers’ may turn out to be tomorrow’s ‘winners’, and ‘winning’ may entail learning from and adopting the rhetoric and images of the other.” This is especially true when considering positions of – and claims to – victimhood. The relationship between identity and memory is never a simple or linear one, and its interwovenness cannot be denied. In considering memory as formative of identity, identity’s influence in the construction and recollection of memory is worthy of equal attention. In “presenting the self” online, the speaker’s motive, or desired action, is essential in his/her assertion of perceived identity. The assertion is, however, not static, and needs to be viewed as being both created and asserted at the same time. When it comes to this process in the collective, few platforms illustrate its vibrancy as directly as current online platforms of shared experience.¹⁵⁶ This process of simultaneous memory-making and memory (and identity) assertion is exemplified in the group “GRENSOORLOG / BORDER WAR 1966–1989”.

4.3.1 Facebook group: “GRENSOORLOG / Border War 1966–1989.”

¹⁵⁶ It needs to be noted that the notion of “shared experiences” is in itself flawed. As illustrated later in the chapter in a discussion of the group’s discourse, some of the commentators and members of the group are not veterans of the war themselves. The argument could be made, however, that all share the experience of being part of – or having contact with (e.g. veterans’ children) – a militarised generation.

“GRENSOORLOG / Border War 1966–1989” has 54 506 members on Facebook (18 July 2018). The oldest shared file on the group was posted in 2011. I chose this group for analysis as it is by far the largest online community in social media that is providing a platform for Border War veterans. The group’s description is as follows:

“Without a call we report for duty!!

We are the National Conscription generation. The youngest is about 35 and the oldest ones are in their sixties. We have built the new South Africa! We were the generation that gave our time for our nation, in many ways. Many of our fathers and grandfathers wore medals from the Second World War. We (sometimes) received a *Pro-Patria* but now we are just degenerated, disrespected and kicked under the ass ... ‘How would they understand, they weren’t there’, is the mantra of the returned Border veteran. Brown Angolan soil falls on the mother’s clean white bathroom floor when she does her soldier-son’s laundry. She doesn’t want to know any more ... This group have a [sic] age restriction of R21+. Many freedoms are allowed on the Forum and we don’t want to impose boundaries. But, in order to combat abuse, Admin retains the right to immediately remove any posts/comments without comment. If the post/comment is removed, enquire with Admin by means of a personal message, NOT on the page, the abovementioned will be removed.”¹⁵⁷

Although the vast majority of the group’s members are between the ages of 35 and 60, as mentioned in the group’s introduction above, the group is by no means homogenous. I was surprised to find a large number of female group members. This can be seen in some of the “threads” I have selected to illustrate prevalent discourses on the group. The group mostly consists of Afrikaans-speaking white males but it is not uncommon for English-speaking veterans to join in the discussions.

¹⁵⁷ Trans. “Sonder n oproep instruksie tree ons aan!!

Ons is die Nasionale Diensplig generasie. Die jongste is omtrent 35 en die oudste in die sestiger jare. Ons het die nuwe Suid Afrika gebou! Ons is die geslag wat ons tyd vir die nasie gegee het, op baie maniere. Baie van ons pa’s en oupa’s het Wêreld Oorlog II medaljes gedra. Ons het (somtyds) a *Pro-Patria* gekry, maar nou word ons net afgekraak, geminag en kry ‘n skop in die gat ... ‘Hoe sal julle verstaan, julle was nie daár nie,’ is die mantra van die teruggekeerde grenssoldaat. Bruin Angolese grond val op die ma se skoon wit badkamervloer wanneer sy haar soldaat-seun se wasgoed doen. Verder wil sy nie weet nie ... Hierdie Groep het ‘n ouderdomsbepanking van R21+. Baie vryhede word toegelaat op hierdie Forum en ons wil nie grense daarstel nie. Maar, om misbruik te verhoed, behou Admin. die reg om enige pos/kommentaar summier te verwyder sonder kommentaar. As ‘n pos/kommentaar verwyder is, doen navraag by Admin by wyse van ‘n persoonlike boodskap, NIE op die Blad nie, laasgenoemde sal verwyder word.”

4.4 Themes found in online discourses surrounding the Border War

As I observed this group for the larger part of two to three years, between 2015 and 2017, I have attempted to group some of the themes most commonly discussed. This part of the research returns to the start of the iterative cyclic web (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) as it involves the phase selecting which ideas to explore. This also involves choosing which ideas and themes to leave out of the discussion. The discourses were also chosen on the basis of the group's reaction. I have also tried to exclude "fringe figures" whenever possible and have attempted to include the posts and comments most representative of the daily conversations observed over the period I have watched this community interact. This is, of course, a qualitative measure which relies mostly on my own (inherently biased and unobjective) lens as a researcher and ultimately, as an artist. The alternative, a quantitative analysis, would be very hard to construct as the content involves narrative and discourse – two fields which yield questionable results when quantified. Although this loose approach might at first seem random or unstructured as it is not chronological, I have done this purposefully to get an impressionistic overview of the group's central veins of discourse. A great strength of discourse analysis when applied to an online platform – and discursive analysis in general – is that it is possible to get quite a nuanced overview of the collective's views. Whilst it would be naive to presume the group's views can be encapsulated to present the collective, these clusters of themes serve to show not only the commonalities, but also the deviations in the collective. Often it is within these discrepancies that much truth is found. A "yes/no/maybe" survey often ignores the vital tensions that exist within research done in the humanities; tensions even more vital when applied to the creation of a performance or drama.

The other reason in favour of this clustered approach, is its inherent acknowledgement of bias and imperfection. Whilst a quantitative data analysis (e.g. of the number of times a phrase is used) tends to be static and unchangeable, interpreting discourse in a qualitative manner embraces its own fluctuation of meaning. When analysing narrative – something which is in itself seemingly disorganised and random although the matter is, in reality, quite the opposite – qualitatively, I feel it is best to use a measure (even though this term contradicts its purpose: measuring the unmeasurable) that resembles the form. This "unmeasurableness" is articulated beautifully by Walter Benjamin (1969 a) in his call for "traumatic remembering" as opposed to "digestive remembering" (in Humphrey 2002: 51). After his experience of losing a friend in the First World War (the Great War), Benjamin was made "acutely aware of the way public memory was produced as 'narrative memory' – what he called *Erfahrung*, integrated and narratively meaningful"

(Humphrey 2002: 51). The fact that this narrative memory is often restructured to make sense of, and give meaning to what he calls the “unspeakable”, in his opinion, it “closed the mourning of the dead too quickly” (Ibid.). Humphrey (2002: 51) explains Benjamin’s theory as such:

“He argued against ‘digestive remembering’ because it was premised on ‘a certain forgetting, the forgetting of everything that resists incorporation into its system, such as the suicides of anti-war protestors, which are then abjected as so much unnecessary waste’ (Jay 1999: 232). He proposed instead ‘traumatic remembering’ (*Erlebnis*, discontinuous and lived experience) which repeated the past. In this he sought to retain in remembering the very character of the traumatic event a temporally delayed memory which refuses to be located. Thus Benjamin (in Jay 1999: 239) argued: ‘The true fraud...is thus the very belief in the resurrection of the dead, their symbolic recuperation through communal efforts to justify their alleged “sacrifice” and ignore their unrecuperable pain”’.

The Border War is different to Benjamin’s experience of the Great War’s aftermath of “narrative memory” in the sense that the state has not recognised the sacrifices Benjamin speaks of. The responsibility of remembrance thus rests solely on civilians and veterans. In a sense, there has been little “digestive remembering” as a large part of the discourse surrounding the war calls it a “senseless” war-. In an attempt to create an alternative form of “digestive remembering”, “GRENSOORLOG / Border War 1966–1989” commemorates online by sharing text and communal memories of perceived shared experiences. An attempt to quantify this discourse would be to fall into the very trap Benjamin warns against, namely to pretend one can make sense of trauma, of the “unspeakable”.

4.4.1 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) ¹⁵⁸

In the Facebook group’s discussions, the topic of PTSD does not feature as regularly as some of the other themes discussed below, but it is nonetheless a prominent thematic thread. An article on the symptoms of PTSD was published on the group’s “notes” function in 2011. This is the first example I could find on the group that deals with the topic of PTSD. The paper posted is written in a pseudo-academic fashion, but it gives an accurate definition and analysis of the basic principles

¹⁵⁸ It is essential to note that by discussing the symptoms of PTSD I observe individuals, I am not diagnosing the members of this group. As mentioned in the first chapter, I am not a clinician or a psychologist and thus have no desire to veer into this territory. I am merely using these tools (such as the DSM-5) to get material for the creation of a play that would speak to trauma in the collective and in individuals.

of the disorder. It was written by a member of the Veterans of the Vietnam War (VVnW) and has since been published on their website: “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - It’s issued with your medals!” (Gray 2019, online). Gray, not a medical professional himself but a veteran recovering from PTSD, bases his description of the symptoms of the disorder on those found in the APA’s guidelines in the DSM-5 (2013) as discussed in Chapter 2. He uses an informal tone to encourage veterans to seek medical help if they are suffering from the same symptoms as him:

“Tell the Doctor what you have been experiencing and ask him to refer you to a psychiatrist. If your mate or Veteran’s organisation gave you a particular name ask for referral to him. You need a shrink who knows the particular problems of Vietnam Vets.” (Gray 2019, online)

As a veteran himself, he is aware of the stigmas surrounding mental health, but nonetheless encourages veterans to see PTSD as one would any other physiological disorder:

“@#*@^##*&! No way!!! I am not crazy and ain’t no way I’m gonna see no shrink!! No you’re not crazy but a psychiatrist is the professional who can turn your life around for you. You see an ENT specialist if you have consistent sore throat, a neurosurgeon for a crook neck and a bum doctor for piles. For anxiety and PTSD you see a shrink. OK?” (Gray 2019, online)

The comments below were extracted as a reaction to the online article:



The third speaker raises an interesting point around research done on PTSD. Most of the research trials mentioned in the document (and generally in the field of Trauma Studies) have been based on either European or American veterans returning from Vietnam or more recently, Iraq. He also affirms the very staunch patriarchal view held by large parts of the society that conscripts would have subscribed to, that “Big Boys don’t cry.” The fourth speaker affirms the view that the Americanised PTSD is somehow different from the trauma suffered by Border War veterans: “In South Africa we just call it plain BOSSIES!” This is also possibly a way of trying to diminish the problem, or to hide or downplay its seriousness.

Although the second speaker claims that “our boys” did have help available, he proclaims that this was not made public. The fifth speaker poetically dismisses this help as “useless like tits on a fish!!” One has to wonder whether this statement refers to the speaker’s disregard of psychological help, in other words dismissing the social (soft) sciences as a whole, or whether the speaker is referring to the specific mental health services offered to SADF veterans returning from war.

In another post that caused much reaction, a speaker asks the group members for a recommendation of a psychiatrist who specialises in the treatment of Border War veterans in the Gauteng area.



159

The first respondent (Sidney) tells the speaker that “that psychiatrist will never be the same or practice the same...an old thick tree definitely won’t bend again”.

¹⁵⁹ Trans. “Rene: I am looking for a good psychiatrist that specialises in the treatment of Border War veterans. Can someone please refer me to someone? (in the Gauteng area)”



160

This implication of the futility of psychiatric help is echoed by other speakers. The third respondent recommends that she tries a psychiatrist who also served on the Border, implying that one had to have been there to understand the depth of the trauma.

It is interesting to note in the discourse above that the speaker (Rene) answers Sidney's comment with a pragmatic explanation of her request for a psychiatrist. She expands on the reason she wants her family member to seek medical attention. She uses phrases like "urgent" and "not coping" coupled with the ultimate threat of losing his job and all his benefits. Although she agrees with Sydney, "I know, but it's so flipping sad...", she still seems to hold psychiatric help out as a last resort: "its urgent, someone to help my family member with his work". Although one would not want to speculate, it is also possible that this psychiatric evaluation might have more to do with claiming insurance for being mentally unfit for employment than for seeking treatment. The emphasis is largely on the economic impact of his depression ("losing his job and benefits") and much less to do with his wellness and recovery. Some of the other speakers respond with humour and suggest that mental illness is something to grin and bear. Hein says he's still crazy "but coping" after he was discharged in 1981. Pieter answers Rene's plea with a simple phrase, "Send that bill to the military":

¹⁶⁰ Trans. "Sydney: Darling that psychiatrist will never be the same or practice in the same way... an old this tree you def. won't bend. [sic]

Rene: I know, but its so flipping sad... but it's urgent, somone to help my family member with his job... he's not coping, it's been years. If he doesn't get the right help he'll lose his job and all his benefits.

Rene: He's suffering from severe depression.

Johannes: Look for a psychiatrist who was there himself...maybe Renier du Toit (tagged) knows someone. [sic.]



161

Blame for the military's failure to provide proper debriefing for soldiers is implied in Pieter's statement that the military should pay for his therapy. This correlates with the research done by Connell et al. (2013: 4) discussed in Chapter 2 that showed only one respondent had received social support in the form of therapy or counselling from the state or military. The speakers represent a trend in the group to view veteran issues as something psychiatrists would not understand and this links to what Rene said in the first post. Although Renier (below) agrees with Pieter that the man needing help should rather speak to "pals" than to a psychiatrist, he refers him to a doctor. This doctor is, however, an ex-veteran and thus qualified according to him to understand the individual's struggle.



162

Whereas the thread above concerns a woman contacting the group on behalf of a veteran, the post below was written by a struggling veteran himself. It aptly illustrates the daily struggle of the traumatised soldier:

¹⁶¹ Trans. "Hein: I am 55 was discharged 81. Still as crazy as loon but coping. Looks to me like it's the kids bugging him.

Pieter: Send that bill to the military."

¹⁶² Trans. "Pieter: Rather visit old pals or veterans. No shrink (*literal translation: "head doctor"*) can understand. He needs to talk to his peers. People who understand! Strength.

Renier: Pieter I agree with you! Rather join one of those veteran organisations or speak to your pals who understand. Dr Danie Louw was a paratrooper and has the academic qualifications to help us."



163

The exchange above reveals the desperation of individual veterans struggling with symptoms of PTSD to make sense of their experiences during the War. The fact that Gert's plea for help is answered by Lukas' salute and affirmation of his decision is interesting in that Lukas (presumably) knows nothing about the reasons for, or the details about Gert's traumatic memory or the decision he made. This might have been an error in judgement which he would undoubtedly have changed had he had the chance. Lukas automatically assumes Gert's innocence in the situation and does not question his character. The image of the soldier as inherently good and wise, making tough but necessary decisions, is projected onto Gert without any background knowledge of Gert's character or motivations in the situation. Lukas also makes a point of emphasizing that therapy is rubbish and will not help him. Cassie's comment below also affirms his decision as one that is acceptable under the circumstances – "you did what was expected of you":



164

In the extract above, Cassie compares Gert's actions with Wouter Basson, the controversial doctor who headed "Project Coast", the SADF's biological germ warfare program (BBC 2002, online).

¹⁶³ Trans. "Gert: Hi guys I went to watch *boetie gaan border*. I might sound neurotic. I was in charge of a regiment and made a decision in 1985 that still haunts me to this day. Someone died because of my decision. I don't know how to cope with this anymore. Where can I get help!!!

Lukas: How many people did you save by making that decision? Forget about therapy it's a load of rubbish anyway. If you had to do it again you'd make the same decision. Salute."

¹⁶⁴ Trans. "Cassie: You did what was expected of you, How must WP Wouter Basson and many others feel, Live with it and go on with your life, Greetings

Pieter: Gert I went through a similar situation. It's good to get professional help. But a good social and exchanging notes can also work wonders. I was also in Regiment VDBp. if you want to chat feel free to inbox me."

During his 1999 hearing, “a scientist described how Dr Basson set up a company producing cigarettes laced with anthrax, as well as poisoned chocolate and whisky”; Nelson Mandela was also “said to be among the intended victims” (BBC 1999, online). Some of the other crimes allegedly committed by Dr Basson included him supplying “muscle relaxants which stopped victims breathing” where after bodies were dumped in the sea from aeroplanes (Ibid.). An estimated “200 members of a rebel group fighting South African rule in Namibia were allegedly killed with chemicals Dr Basson supplied” (Ibid.).¹⁶⁵ By comparing Gert with Wouter Basson, Engelbrecht is engaging in a dangerous game of moral relativisation. His comparison with apartheid’s “Doctor Death” is one that aims to comfort the perpetrator by juxtaposing his crimes against one of the worst¹⁶⁶ perpetrators in the system.

Pieter answers with an empathetic tone that illustrates the sense of community created by this online group. He recommends seeking professional help, but he also balances this by appealing to the other commentators’ recommendations that he gets help from his peers through “a good get-together and exchanging notes”. He ends off by extending an offer of *being* this peer group, inviting Gert to ‘inbox’ him – a more intimate and private means of communicating on this social network.

Perhaps the most insightful posts written about the day to day experience of living with war-related trauma comes from Jan:

¹⁶⁵ Witnesses who testified in the TRC hearings described some of the other killing methods developed by Doctor Basson’s “Project Coast”:

- “Project Coast sought to create “smart” poisons, which would only affect blacks, and hoarded enough cholera and anthrax to start epidemics.
- Naked black men were tied to trees, smeared with a poisonous gel and left overnight to see if they would die. When the experiment failed, they were put to death with injections of muscle relaxants.
- Weapon ideas included sugar laced with salmonella, cigarettes with anthrax, chocolates with botulism and whisky with herbicide.” (BBC 2002, online)

¹⁶⁶ It should be noted that Wouter Basson’s trials have been very controversial and that he was granted amnesty after his initial legal trial following his TRC hearing. This amnesty was granted on the grounds that “he had acted under orders of the South African Defence Force (SADF)” (BBC 2012, online).



167

Jan's raw description of his struggle with PTSD is one that also points to the wider impact his struggles must have on his family, especially on his wife. He mentions her twice, first as his only confidante, and secondly as a caretaker, waking him up from his nightmare. The tone of his post is distinctly intimate. As the speaker talks of his wife's support and care through his struggles, he also addresses the members of the group in the same tone of intimacy and knowing. He uses very familiar terms to address members of the group such as "friends". The post also has hints of something sermon-like: "blessed", "beloved" etc. He opens the post by first asserting his silence. This is interesting as the very nature of a post on social media contradicts this claim of not sharing. It is as if he wants to reassure the other members of the group that he is not just another big talking veteran with war stories. He sets the tone for his revelation of the experience by first establishing that his talk is not cheap: "Please understand, I'm not someone that will talk to anyone about those years." Despite his own claims of silence, he thanks the other members of the group for their willingness to share virtually. His intimate tone matches the content that expresses his gratitude

¹⁶⁷ Trans. "Good morning friends, I'm sitting here paging through my old journals and notes on the Border War and I wonder if you experienced it in the same way. For me the time of war can never be forgotten. Please understand, I'm not someone who will talk to anyone about those years. Should it come up in a discussion or should someone question me about an event or incident it will be discussed and then settled. For me, the Border War was intense, it was my life, but, after I finished it was also the most private part of my life which I, apart from my wife, discuss with very few people, if ever. Considering the fact that I share very little, I enjoy the veterans chat pages immensely and appreciate the contributions and photos that you post. This chatting and sharing here on fb means so much to me. To come back to what I said, the war will never be forgotten, at the most random times someone will remind you and the remembrance will be brought back. Like a few hours ago when Losjoe helped me wake up, it was so real, the nightmare, the events, and that's why I'm here now paging and reading talking with Basie and the others. Friends it was a real time, it was my life, it still is and I'm still living it. Are you also still experiencing it this way friends or were all the landmines lifted on your roads and your choppers, did they land safely or does the remembrance still haunt you. A blessed day to you and your loved ones. If someone just wants to talk, that's all right, I'll be here through the night."

for the communities' ongoing support and sharing. He then returns to the reason for him being on the Facebook page in the early hours of the morning during which he wrote the post. The context is that he had just had a nightmare in which the war was "extremely real". This flashback-like nightmare, a symptom typical of PTSD, is something the speaker shares with the group as one would in a therapy session or in a support group. He asserts continually that the war was real, that it was his life and that he is "still living it". The aftereffect of the war is emphasized.

The speakers' views on the Border War as a historical master narrative is unclear. It is difficult to trace a sense of guilt on the one hand or pride on the other. It is as if the speaker is much less concerned with the morality or meaning of the war in the past, than with its very immediate effect in the present – his "living it". He poetically asks, almost in the style of Dylan Thomas, if other members are sharing the same experiences or whether their landmines were removed from their roads and their choppers landed safely. The commonality, the event that binds them, the members of the group, is thus their shared witness of traumatic events. It is an elegy of suffering during and after the war much more than an attempt to make sense of it. This post caused much reaction and many members could relate to the speaker's symptoms of PTSD, his silence and his nightmares:



168

Martin's affirmation of Jan's experience is answered by Jan, who expands on his struggle with sleep and the effect this has on his mental health. Jan uses writing as a tool for managing or coping with this. Writing could also be a reaction or a way of making sense of the events he experienced. One of the only reactions that was not answered by Jan (he answered most), was one that had very overt political undertones (and overtones).

¹⁶⁸ Trans. "Martin: Jan this lack of sleep is the worst!"

Jan: Martin, good day friend, yes the not sleeping gets to you, the irregular sleep messes with my head and gets me out of a routine. I write a lot when it gets bad."



169

Gerald's extremist views are introduced through his shared experience with the other members – lack of sleep because of nightmares. His connecting of this with his call to taking action against a perceived enemy (presumably the reigning ANC government) is somewhat artificial i.e. because we can't sleep the war didn't stop. This is possibly a misinterpretation of Jan's assertion that he is still "living the war". Gerald's reference to the continuation of conflict was ignored in the thread and stands out as the only overtly political and inflammatory answer to the thread. What is troubling about the post is its connection of the experience of PTSD with a call to arms. A lack of psychiatric help or an unwillingness to seek treatment on the individual's part could lead to greater vulnerability and openness to extremist ideas such as the ones Gerald promotes. While it appears that the group largely ignored his comment and viewed it as irrelevant to the topic, it would seem this train of thought holds a potential threat to a peaceful democracy. Gerald's comment is followed by Seri:



170

This tragic tale of extreme PTSD leading to alcoholism is one that is unfortunately not uncommon in anecdotes told on the group about the after-effects of the war. The study by Connell et al. (2013: 4) states that "12% of respondents...reported alcohol dependence or abuse" which is "higher than

¹⁶⁹ Trans. "Gerald: I also struggle to sleep. Most evenings are like this. Now I wonder whether the war has really ended? Or was it all a lie and we were just called back from the border so that our noses could be rubbed in the fact that our blood and lives were sold to the enemy!!! Our country was sold to the same enemy we fought against with our friends! We didn't fight for ourselves. We fought for our people, for our kids and our grandkids. We are still the only hope for our country. Maybe not young anymore, but still the only hope. We're the only ones who remain of that time. There is no more time to train young men. What will we decide???"

¹⁷⁰ Trans. "Seri: I rented a room with a friend about 12 years ago. At night a man shouted: shoot to kill! Shoot to kill!! I asked my cousin who was his friend about this and he said this was how he had returned from the Border... the man literally drank whiskey from morning to evening, barely spoke...he died a while back."

the findings from the Veterans Experience Study (VES).” In contrast to this, other members of the group answered this post by talking about how the symptoms of PTSD had passed them by:



171

Johan’s comment speaks for a great majority of the group’s members when he notes with humour how only some remnants of the bad memories stay with him. The majority of the Border War Veterans saw little to no action and were thus not as likely to develop clinical PTSD as their exposure to the traumatic event was limited. This is in line with literature on PTSD discussed in the second chapter that says that most of the soldiers exposed to trauma will not develop PTSD. The remnants of these memories are ingrained, however, as Johan suggests from this sensory trigger. Not all of the veterans exposed to traumatic events develop PTSD and may show resilience. Research, as discussed at length in the second chapter, supports these findings and some members comment on this lack of symptoms. Schalk responds to Jan’s post, wondering if “maybe he’s crazy for not feeling this way” as his experience of the war were some of the best days of his life:



172

Schalk’s response is quite typical of many of the members on the group who had a fantastic time on the Border. His comment veers into moral pronouncements to make sense of his lack of PTSD type symptoms: “I have no nightmares or after-effects from it as it was war and the enemy could shoot back and they did.” This pronouncement which places the individual’s violent deeds within

¹⁷¹ Trans. “I don’t have things that bother me but the sliding/sucking sound of a mortar down its pipe, or something like it – it’s the shittiest sound in the world, I’d sooner listen to Kurt Darren than have to hear that.”

¹⁷² Trans. “Schalk: I don’t know how to put it if I’m crazy you decide, but my Border service was the best of my life and I have no nightmares or after-effects from it as it was war and the enemy could shoot back and they did. I enjoy talking about it and even more the sound of mortars shooting are music to my ears. Maybe I’m lucky, but it’s not bothering me one bit.

Jan: Schalk, that’s fantastic that you can talk about it and that you don’t have scars. There were so many days, days of laughing and silliness and more serious days, yes there are many facets.”

the framework of war, thus exempting him from responsibility and culpability for his action, is one that is quite common in the group. Very often men will pronounce that they offered what was asked of them for the country (*“ons sal offer wat jy vra”*). Schalk also asserts that the enemy could fight back and did fight back, implying a kind of equality and abdication on his part of moral culpability in upholding and protecting the apartheid regime. When considering the fact that these men were told their primary fight was against communism and countries aided by the Cuban government, his claims are not without merit. When one takes into account the information that has come to light after 1994, with the fall of state-controlled propaganda, when the truth about the SADF’s active role in upholding the values of apartheid came to the fore, the question does arise whether this individual should “reframe” his actions in the light of this, or whether “I didn’t know” is good enough when reflecting upon individual actions. Jan responds to this answer with quite a balanced view of Schalk’s observations, highlighting the many different aspects and dimensions the war encompassed.

Whilst Schalk enjoys talking about his experiences in the SADF, Joseph’s response speaks to Jan’s own struggle to open up about the War.



173

Joseph’s experience is complicated by the fact that his role in the SADF required secrecy. The fact that he worked with highly confidential information adds another layer to the typical veteran’s conspiracy of silence. Joseph is also not a typical member of the group as he served in the military for much longer than the required 24 months of conscription. He served the SADF, and presumably later the SANDF for 43 years. His answer, however, is about the Border War experience. His “blanking out” some of his experiences alludes to severe symptoms of PTSD. He is open to sharing in later years and admits to it “helping”. Despite all of this, he ends his response by maintaining that this was “still the best days of my life” confirming Jan’s analysis of the experience to be multi-faceted. Mark’s reply to Jan’s post provides an interesting overview of veterans struggling with

¹⁷³ Trans. “I could never tell my wife where I was and what we did. I was a signaller but worked for 17 years in a department where I could tell no one where and what. I realise nowadays I have blanked out a lot of things and it comes back when I read a book and think I was part of that and that. There are many memories I’ll never share, but I’m realising it helps to talk about it.”

PTSD as he speaks of his experience joining the Memorable Order of the Tin Hats (M.O.T.H.), an international organisation for military veterans.



174

He reflects that “maybe psychiatric help was needed”, this after hearing about the experiences of Border War veterans in the organisation. Importantly, Mark attributes this freedom to share in the MOTH group to members “not feeling judged”. This is key to understanding the trauma of Border War veterans. Because the meaning of the war (or lack thereof) is so contested, veterans are possibly hesitant to talk about their personal traumas in the public sphere as they are not traditional “victims” of the traumatic event or experience. In response to Mark’s answer, Joey, presumably the widow of a Border War veteran, speaks of her husband’s struggle with the military experience:



175

Joey is very open about her husband’s struggle with the events he was exposed to during the war. She uses the past tense when referring to this as he has presumably passed away. His disclosure was incomplete and she uses “here and there” to describe his partial sharing of his experience. Jan – characteristically empathetic – extends his support and prayers to this wife of a military veteran. The struggle above is contradicted by Stephan in 2013 who challenges the notion that all veterans will suffer from ongoing symptoms of PTSD. This “pull up your socks” approach by Stephan had many “likes” (194) and represents the views of a large number of the group’s members who feel

¹⁷⁴ Trans. “I joined Moth 11 years ago and it still amazes me to this day how men can start to talk about their experiences, the men feel comfortable talking as they are not being judged – some stories do make me think that psychiatric treatment might be necessary, men sometimes get tears in their eyes over the things they remember.”

¹⁷⁵ Trans. “Joey: My husband also sometimes got tears in his eyes. I loved him so much and it was difficult to see, the pain deep inside him over what happened over there. He some mentioned things here and there that made me realize how bad it was.

Jan: Ah Joey, it sounds so empty, just know that if we say we’re thinking about you and praying for you we mean it sincerely.”

like some of the men on the group were using their Border War experience as an excuse for questionable behaviour later on in life:



176

This call for resilience is one that can either be read as a call for optimism and pragmatism or as an example of toxic masculinity that prohibits men from seeking psychiatric help in the hope that they “get over it and build a bridge”. Whilst resilience is ideal in the face of trauma, failure to “build the bridge” can have serious, even fatal, consequences. By saying the army made him “a man not a failure”, masculinity is posed as the antithesis to failure.

From the observations above it is clear that not all Border War veterans suffer from PTSD, in fact, those who do are in the minority – 33% according to the study by Connell et al. (2013: 4). The fact that the speaker emphasizes the time that has passed (thirty years) ironically affirms the research done which was mentioned in Chapter 2. This chapter indicated that veterans often have an increase in symptoms of PTSD as they get older or transition through a phase in life. Compare the finding of Solomon & Mikulincer (2006: 664, cited in Connell et al. 2013: 4) that: “In the course of this transition, the altered perspective may force the forgotten or suppressed traumatic memories up to the foreground again.” The fact that these men are only speaking out now makes sense when one looks at the literature that shows this as a pattern of trauma. The experience of symptoms are diverse and not singular in their effect.

It is also clear from the posts that the traumatic experience has a very direct effect on the veterans’ families, especially their wives. Most of the posts read on the groups speak of their wife as their

¹⁷⁶ Trans. “Sorry if I sound like a sourpuss or it I piss off a few friends... but I have to say I’m getting tired of guys who did a few months of conscription and blame the army 30 years later for their failed marriages and lives!! Build a bloody bridge and get over it and get a life! The Army made a man out of me, not a failure. And yes I also struggled to adapt after those first months but my cup was half full not half empty and I adapted and grew (hopefully) into an adult that brings my side.”

only confidante. The second group in which they confide are their peers and co-veterans. This is re-iterated often as a solution preferable to psychiatric help. Psychiatric help (therapy) seems to be the very last resort for these men and reserved only for those who cannot get over it and “build a bridge”. The overwhelming theme prevalent on the subject of trauma and PTSD amongst veterans on the group seems to be silence or not speaking about the traumatic event. Most of the men, in some form or another, speak about how difficult it is to utter the “unspeakable”. This links to the research done on the relationship between the “preverbal” (Leavy 2017: 195) and trauma.¹⁷⁷ The trauma, what Benjamin calls the “unspeakable” (in Humphrey 2002: 51) remains “traumatic memory” when veterans recount their traumas without attaching overt meaning to this such as in Jan’s case. When they attempt to link this with meaning and purpose, it becomes a more dangerous form of “digestive memory” (Jay 1999: 232).

4.4.2 When things were better

One of the most common types of posts found on the group are those of reminiscence. Often veterans will post a picture of food, uniforms or even weapons that were commonly used during their years of conscription. This often has a nostalgic undertone. It is difficult to view these posts as pure reminiscence or as mere retellings. Because of the SADF’s political motivations, these individuals’ nostalgia can at times tinge what might in another setting seem to be devoid of overt political or ideological signification.

¹⁷⁷ Dori Laub refers to “the collapse of witnessing” (Caruth 1995: 10). See Chapter 1.



In the figure above, the photo caption reads, “When discipline was still the norm”. This statement is loaded with potentially harmful nostalgia. A common thread in the group’s rhetoric is the notion that young men who go through conscription are somehow more disciplined in their daily lives and that veterans are more productive members of society. This view is, of course, not specific to the South African context. Much has been written about the civilian benefits, and perceived benefit of the military experience.¹⁷⁸ What complicates this rose-coloured view of the South African military experience is the fact that conscription, and indirectly a militarised society, is directly linked with the apartheid era. The fact that the era was also one in which soldiers were used to protect¹⁷⁹ the civilian population contributes to this notion. This past society, where discipline is

¹⁷⁸ One of the most famous longitudinal studies done on this was by Sampson & Laub (1996). Other studies include:

Bachman, J. et al. 2000. “Who chooses military service? Correlates of propensity and enlistment in the US Armed Forces”. *Military Psychology*, 12(1): 1–30.

Jennings, P. et al. 2006. “Combat exposure, perceived benefits of military service, and wisdom in later life: Findings from the Normative Aging Study”. *Research on Aging*, 28(1): 115–134.

Sampson, R. & Laub, J. 1996. “Socioeconomic achievement in the life course of disadvantaged men: Military service as a turning point, circa 1940–1965”. *American sociological review*, 347–367.

¹⁷⁹ This “protection” was of course an extension of the apartheid government which upheld its values of segregation. The current climate of extreme violence in townships is seen by some as a result of the military’s decision to withdraw from these areas. Recent calls for their re-deployment have

The speakers continue along the same vein. The fourth speaker makes a statement that has informally become one of the Border War veteran's slogans: "The best time I never want to have again."¹⁸² This statement is refuted by another who says that this was a waste of time. The reader is left to wonder whether the speaker is referring to the discipline the picture denotes or to conscription service on the Border as a whole.

4.4.3 *Questioning fathers*

Connell et al.'s (2013: 3) research on veterans showed that "all of their respondents had fathered children with the majority (75%) having three or more". The impact of the war on these children is something that has not yet been measured and will hopefully be examined by the psychiatric community in future. As discussed in the second chapter, the majority of the veterans studied by Connell et al. (2013: 4) "were exposed to traumatic events as young men, at the stage of identity development". This impact on the development of their identity could thus have a significant ripple effect on their families. One would expect this impact to be a wholly negative one. Interestingly, however, the authors of the PTSD study found "a high proportion of respondents" had children and were "in stable family relationships"¹⁸³ (Ibid.). They draw the following conclusion:

[This] would imply that this sample sustained a high level of intimacy, a trait that could explain the high level of resilience found among them. Similar results were found in other studies and assisting veterans to achieve stable family relationships could ensure a high level of resilience.

(Connell et al. 2013: 4)

Possibly because of these fathers having sustained a "high level of intimacy", the children of Border War veterans frequently write posts on the group. This was somewhat surprising to me. I

¹⁸² "In die weermag leer jy dat slegs offisiere gesalueer word, maar vandag salueer ek al my maats van dekades gelede, ongeag die rang wat hulle gedra het, vir die lekkerste tyd van ons lewens wat ons nooit weer wil oorhê nie!" (Sandvelder 2014, online)

<http://www.litnet.co.za/brief-karakters-en-karikature/>

"Lekkerste twee jaar wat ek nooit weer wil beleef nie." (Cooper 2014, online)

¹⁸³ The study done by Connell et al. (2013: 1) did not include an in-depth analysis of the veterans' quality of life or personal relationships. The only questions asked pertaining to their families in the questionnaire used was their marital status and their number of children. To conclude from this that these veterans had "stable family relationships" using only the divorce rate is possibly a tad over-simplified. The low divorce rate could also be due to the socio-economic area the sample was taken from – a school in a well-to-do area – or due to the high level of education the sample size had achieved – something that has proved to be a buffer against PTSD: "Previous studies have linked low education attainment with vulnerability to PTSD" (Connell et al. 2013: 4).

had expected a small number of posts but was overwhelmed by the amount of posts written by the children of veterans. Their posts usually fall into one of three categories: questions, commemoration, and honour. These categories are not formal and often overlap in their content.

4.4.3.1 Questions

By far, the most common posts by the children of veterans are questions relating to their fathers' military service. Given the "significant national amnesia which may be due to the secrecy in which the war was conducted and that these veterans were part of the discredited (apartheid) regime" (Connell et al. 2013: 2), it would seem that the majority of these children are left without answers about their father's involvement in the military. The silence on their fathers' part could also be caused by trauma, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, contributing to the secrecy surrounding veterans. If what veterans are saying on the group is true – i.e. "it was...the most private part of my life which, apart from my wife, I discuss with very few people, if ever"¹⁸⁴ – the children are left without answers about a part of their fathers' lives that had a significant impact on their development. The following posts are very common where children ask for other veterans who had maybe served with their father in the military:



185

Some provide detailed information, such as Neil above, and others provide very little information such as those below:

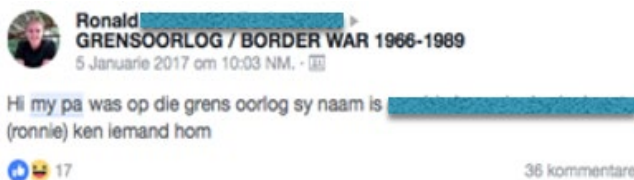


186

¹⁸⁴ See section on trauma: Jan's post.

¹⁸⁵ Trans. "Good evening all I would like to know if there are any uncles who were in the army with my dad. He was ---- and his brother ----, they were twins 74–76 they were there if I understand correctly the one was in Delta and the other in Bravo company. More information I don't have and I would like to find out more thanks. [sic]"

¹⁸⁶ Trans. "My dad was in osikati 1979...round there...any others?"



187

The post above generated a lot of (virtual) laughs as the young man had attempted to find a needle in a haystack. The children are sometimes quite young – early high school – and others are much older. The members of the group are very helpful and usually manage to connect the children with a veteran whom their dad knew or had contact with. They usually connect privately after this via the private message function. It seems that despite their claims to silence outside the group (offline), the group has become a platform where this silence is broken by veterans. I also find that they are open to sharing privately if requested, even with non-veterans such as these children. One of the posts had to do with questions about the hostages taken by Gerhard during the war:



188

He is answered by Jacques who recommends a book with information regarding this. The exchange regarding his father's silence is of particular interest:



189

¹⁸⁷ Trans. "My dad was in the border war his name is - (ronnie) does anyone know him?"

¹⁸⁸ Trans. "Is there anyone who was part of the hostages?"

¹⁸⁹ Trans. "Jacques: 'South Africa's Border War'

Gerhard: Thanks for the info. I'll try and get my dad to tell a few stories but the old man is pretty quiet about it.

Gerhard's confession of his father's silence is immediately met with camaraderie on the part of Jacques saying there is probably a reason he does not talk. The son's need for answers about his father's trauma – a hostage situation – is, in this case, met with cold facts (a book) and support for his father's silence. Some of the questions have to do with memorabilia they find that belongs (or belonged) to their dad. This post by Tokkie generated much reaction:



190

This was answered by John:



191

This son finds out about his father's heroism via the group. In this sense, the group provides some of these children with very satisfactory answers to questions about their fathers. One cannot help but wonder if these answers would have carried more weight had the fathers themselves been able to break their silence to answer their children.

4.4.3.2 Commemoration

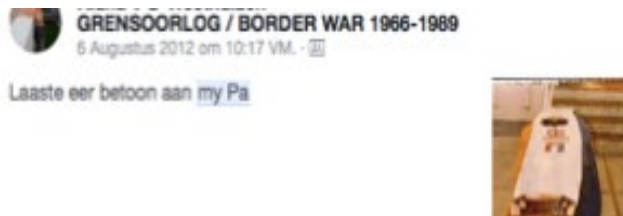
The posts on “commemoration” remember the dead. These posts are written by the children who have lost a father during the war. Riana posts a picture of her dad's coffin in what appears to be a military burial:

Jacques: Don't force him...maybe there's a reason he doesn't want to talk.

Gerhard: Yes uncle no I'd never do that. [sic]

¹⁹⁰Trans. “My dad passed away 17 years ago and I always asked him about the border war. Today I was visiting my mom and my stepdad on their farm and came across his step out uniform. Can someone please tell me what this crest is?”

¹⁹¹ Trans. “Your dad was a hero my son. He was a sapper.”



192

Mornay had posted a picture of his father's honorary medals and badges after framing it. These posts are usually followed by comments of respect and "salutes". The children of these veterans are mostly proud of their father's role in the war effort.



193

Gerhard asks if it would be okay to share a few photos of his late dad with the "uncles":



194

What is notable about Gerhard's post is that he uses no punctuation marks and only chooses to capitalise two words: "Uncles" and "Dad". The respect he has for these elders and his father is tangible in the post. He addresses the men in the familiar, yet respectful address of "ooms" (uncles). This term is quite common in posts written by younger children. The sense of hierarchy and patriarchy¹⁹⁵ is ever-present. This links with findings that were discussed on theories of memory-making earlier in the chapter. Humphrey's (2002: 47) claim that "legacies of war persist in private memory as trauma, physical scars and gross bodily deformities" and are "turned into

¹⁹² Trans. "Last commemoration to my dad."

¹⁹³ Trans. "I framed my dad well"

¹⁹⁴ Trans. "Uncles may I post my dad's photos on your page it's not pretty but I think my dad would have liked to share it with you he was in 61 meg and he is or was also just a farmer boy taught me so much and proud of my Dad [sic]"

¹⁹⁵ I do not use the term "patriarchy" in a totally negative sense when describing the culture of masculinity prevalent amongst the white Afrikaner. "Patriarchy" as a system of evil oppression is in this case, an oversimplification. The respect with which these young men and women speak of their fathers – in a space such as Facebook not known for respect or decency – possibly speaks of nuances that exist within the patriarchal system. See the discussion on the "Mighty Men" movement for more information on this.

collective memories through commemoration in war memorials, war memoirs, literature, family biography and archived testimonies” is shown through these children’s attempts to make sense of their family’s history. It is as if these children need to find answers to questions about their fathers to make sense of their own identities in a post-apartheid society. This is complicated by the fact that outside of this group these men would not be hailed as heroes of war but rather as those on the wrong side of history. The group becomes a space separate from the outside world where their fathers’ deeds are not questioned nor their culpability examined. Their fathers are celebrated simply as men who heeded the call and served their country. This, in turn, would also re-affirm these children’s own status as worthy citizens of South Africa, as opposed to children of oppressors. In this sense, the group not only serves partly to reflect and to shape a collective identity of veterans and their memories, but also to reflect these memories and identity to their children.

4.4.3.3 Honour

Another type of post the children submit about their fathers is those that attempt to honour the living. These posts usually feature a picture of the son or daughter with his or her father with a caption that celebrates him for his bravery in the war. Sune posted a picture of herself and her father on her wedding day, celebrating the bravery of the soldiers who helped save him:



196

197

Bernie's post about his father is quite similar to those mentioned earlier with questions about the father's activities during the war. His father is still alive, however, and it seems this is a way of publicly honouring his father amongst his peers. Often the children will post a simple picture and caption such as "my dad" by Morné in this post:



Apart from the three broad categories mentioned above, other posts by children have to do with their own painful experiences of the war. Some of the posts that stood out to me in particular as contributing to important dialogue about the aftermath of the war, but which did not fit into these broad categories, are discussed below. The first one is by Venitta:



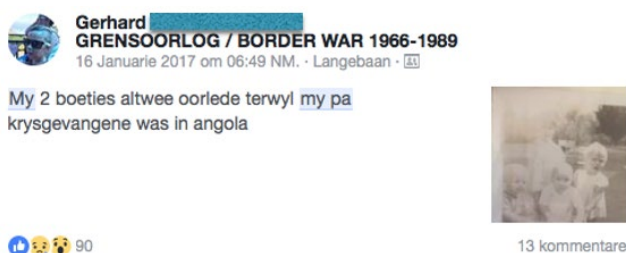
198

¹⁹⁶ Trans. "Good morning all. I just want to share something with you. My dad ---- stepped on a landmine in Angola on 10 August 1982. They had to go and help people whose plane had been shot down. If it wasn't for everyone who helped him that day, he would not have been able to be at my wedding today.

¹⁹⁷ Trans. "Good evening men and mennines-my dad was also on the border when I asked him his answers were ..." "Yes in 1978 I was in Ruacana for 6 months and in 1984 at katimo in for 3 months and there are too many names and yes I was a cannon specialist"...yip-cannonhead...his name is. So proud of him! Are there maybe some guys out there who can remember him? Just asking for interest's sake."

¹⁹⁸ Trans. "You know, the photos on this group take me so far back. I often show the photos to my dad and it brings him close to tears. I wasn't physically involved in the war myself, but as a toddler I already saw how cruel humanity can be towards each other. Some of my earlier memories are of the kaspis driving through the Rundu with the bodies of terrorists attached to them. And my dad whom we saw once every 6 months because he was in Buffalo. I was nine when for the first time I stayed at with my dad in a house for longer than a weekend. The things he saw, left their mark on him, like I believe it did to many men who went there, but he is strong and carries on. Thanks for the great group, you take me on a trip down my childhood."

This insightful post by Venitta is one that speaks with eloquence of the traumas faced by civilians during war and by the families of veterans. It is as if Venitta is coming clean about her own experiences of trauma as a little girl. It is interesting that she still refers to the corpses hanging from the caspiers as “terrorists”. This might indicate that little has changed in her views of the politics that were at work in the war, i.e. that they were merely fighting communism. This view is explored in the second chapter and explained by Baines (2008: 219) who writes that “South Africa’s citizen soldiers believed that ‘terrorists’ aided and abetted by communists were threatening to destroy white society in the country”. Politics are, however, not central to the post and it is clear that the speaker has “lived the war” as Jan describes it in the previous section. The fact that her father was absent for a great part of her childhood is echoed by Gerhard:



199

The post by Gerhard does not commemorate his father’s death, but rather those of the siblings he lost whilst his father was absent. The absence of a father combined with the loss of two siblings would have a devastating effect on any developing child. Gerhard is the same son who tried to find out about the facts surrounding his father’s hostage situation. The fact that he is sharing this very personal tragedy says something about the virtual sense of community created in the group. The sharing of the personal is interwoven with memories of the war and left to be untangled by the children of the veterans.

4.4.4 Remembrance

The other popular theme of discourse on the group has to do with remembrance and the shaping of memories. Veterans often post pictures of their war memorabilia or photos to commemorate those whom they lost and to work (write) through their traumas. This remembrance is usually in the light of their current lives, as Jan’s post say he is “still living the war”. Jaap writes a long post at the end of 2016:

¹⁹⁹ Trans. “My 2 brothers both died while my dad was held hostage in angola.” [sic]



200

The post reads as a kind of memoir. The speaker distinguishes between the now and the past but connects the events in his present life with those on the Border War. The post starts off in a nostalgic tone but quickly switches to the author's disillusionment about war. This post is one that remembers and honours the soldiers who died at war. Interestingly, the speaker shows remarkable vulnerability in writing about his own, somewhat unheroic thoughts: "I am glad it's not me". He is plagued by survivor's guilt and claims that this mere thought he had as he carried his friend's corpse that day has haunted him ever since. Jaap gives the readers of the group an idea of how interwoven his memories of the war are with his daily life. The memories he invokes appeal to the senses: the taste of cooldrink, the feeling of heat, the smell of blood. Jaap's sudden remembrance and connection of the war with his present life supports the research mentioned in Chapter 2 about trauma and the middle-aged. In the transition of midlife "the altered perspective may force the forgotten or suppressed traumatic memories up to the foreground again" (Solomon et al. 2006: 664). He speaks of this time in the year when things are "quiet" when men around him are dying.

²⁰⁰ Trans. "Do you remember when we were about 18,19,20...we believed nothing could happen to us, much less that we could die...good reason why the best soldiers are between 18 and 25. Just heard a colleague from work, my age, has died this afternoon, last month had a break-in at home, and just before Christmas Day, my son was purpose run off the road on purpose on his motorcycle. So, at present, it feels to me that 2016 has me in its aim, and has now found the correct distance. When I see how the men around me, some even younger, are dying you can't help but wonder when your name and number will be read out on the Final Rollcall. Still when things are quiet this time of year, my thoughts go to the warm days on 8 SAI, the smell of the mess hall, looking forward to a cold bottle of Sparletta in the canteen, getting ready for inspection, PT, the other men's stories, from there to the cold and mist on 6 SAI, and then suddenly the heat of the border, the dust, brown tents and Makalani palms. When I stood by my son in the emergency room a few days ago, I smelt his blood, and it took me back to the border, the smell of death and of your friends' blood. Once I helped to carry the corpse of my friend and my first insensitive thought was "Gosh, I am glad it's not me"...now 35 years after that day those thoughts still gnaw at me. My 40 Days may have already started. So I wish everyone joy and prosperity for 2017. And special thoughts to the countless comrades whose names are written on the wall. You may be gone but you're not forgotten. Enjoy today as if it were your last."

This thinking leads to the sensory memories mentioned above. As Solomon et al. (2006: 664) describes the midlife phase as one that “entails some reduction in activity and a shift from planning to reminisce and from occupation with current events to the review and rethinking of one’s life”, this re-evaluation can lead to the subject’s need to commemorate and remember the sacrifices made by himself and others.

4.4.5 *A call to arms*

Although the Facebook group is one that supposedly commemorates the Border War and its soldiers, throughout my observations, I gained the distinct impression that the group not only commemorates the white victims of war but also the white victims of crime in contemporary South Africa. In one particularly disturbing public post, a father tells of his son’s murder on a farm:



201

The above statement in the context of a group that commemorate their service to the SADF, is more complex than an individual sharing the death of his son with fellow veterans. One of the key aspects the speaker discloses, is the location of the murder of his son which took place on a farm. To anyone outside South Africa, this information would be irrelevant. This disclosure, however, reveals a lot about why the speaker would choose this specific group to commemorate his son’s death. The incidence of murders on farms in South Africa is much higher than the rate for civilians living elsewhere.²⁰² A comment below is made by a woman who shares the plight of what many consider to be a “white genocide”:

²⁰¹ Trans. “Hey there guys my son was murdered on 23 December he was but 27 at least I did my part 88-89 what is happening in our country”.

²⁰² The figures for these murders are disputed by some who argue that it should be compared with the statistics of murders perpetrated in townships for instance. See Makhele, T. 2018. “Black people in townships are unsafer than white people on farms”. *News24*. <https://www.news24.com/MyNews24/black-people-in-townships-are-unsafest-than-white-people-on-farms-20180614>



203

Her comments refer to an Agricultural Society's case that was made on behalf of white farmers to the United Nations. This speaker talks about declaring a state of war and even of getting civilians to defend themselves. The proposal she speaks of would ensure that pedestrians get a pass. This pass system was used in the apartheid era to control the black population in a very similar fashion. It is also interesting to note that the speaker is indirectly making the same call to arms as the black girl she quotes on Facebook. This phrase, "one settler, one bullet", is one that was used to incite violence and uprisings during the apartheid years. This phrase has gone on to be used by militant left-wing politicians such as Julius Malema in the aftermath of 1994. It would seem that this man's tragedy confirms many of the fears that were used to incite white men to serve as conscripts. Herman Giliomee (1997: 120) writes:

In 1990, two months after negotiations started, 49 percent of whites agreed with the statement that there was reason to fear for their own safety and that of their family in the future; 43 percent felt otherwise.

It would seem to some that with South Africa's soaring crime statistics in the post-apartheid years, the fears harboured by many white South Africans have unfortunately proved to be true. The groups' racialization of the problem is, however, problematic as all South Africans are exposed to crime. Also under the post by the speaker who lost his son, a speaker comments with nostalgia about his longing for the "the old days", presumably before the fall of apartheid:

²⁰³ Trans. "Agri Forum is trying to get the UN to declare a state of War in SA.... In a state of War certain Laws come into place: such as checkpoints where every pedestrian or vehicle must have a pass in order to move.. 'Dire straits causes direct Measurements' we must declare a state of War Ourselves! Even get our defense in order! There's a Black Girl on Facebook that joined the Police this year, her Profile is: Learning everything about guns. ONE SETTLER! ONE BULLET! I ask you, what about the recent settlers from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, South West!!!! And many more? Their numbers are twice as many as the boerevolk that walked over the Drakensberg with the ox-wagons...just to clarify, the boerevolk is not only Afrikaans-speaking!!!! English, Bantu and Afrikaans, go see at the photos for yourself!!!!"

Oliver [redacted] ontvou julle die dae toe ons bus kon vang 11h30 in die aand huis toe, lekker gesels met die bus drywer toe ons lekker by n dans plek gekuier het, hoe ons window shopping gedoen het in sunnyside....vandag ry geen bus na 7uur nie, venters word met industrail steel deur vervang, wie is hierdie duivel wie? wie is hierdie gees van die hel.....
Hou van · Antwoord · 6 · 29 Desember 2016 om 05:55 NM.

204

The aftermath of apartheid is described as something inhabited by “the spirit of hell”. The speaker invokes the spiritual discourse of the apartheid era, which used the church to propagate fear for the “other”. In another comment the same speaker uses the New Testament to justify a call to war:

Oliver [redacted] Mense in die nuwe testament staan dit so, "James" "there will come a time when you must sell your cloak and buy a sword".....hoe kom terug staan ek toelaat dat hulle ons mense vermoor.....hulle druk kruise in die vrouens se keele af na hulle verkrag en vermoor word, hulle wat n pik ek deurboor die bybel en in die boer wat hulle gemartel het se borskas.....staan op,, staan op....ontdou hierdie dinge....gee die saak voor die Here dag en nag.....doen dit ek smeeek julle, stry met ons Vader in die Hemel ons daan sy kinders, hy ons bridegroom, does a husband to be kick his bride and beat her up before marriage????pleit assb
Hou van · Antwoord · 29 Desember 2016 om 05:52 NM. · Gewysig

205

The reactions to this post are very revealing. Although the speaker reveals nothing of his son’s murderer’s identity, the assumption is immediately made that the perpetrators were black in the comments above. The speaker uses extreme language to describe a disillusionment with the current climate of violence in South Africa and clearly draws lines between “us” and “them”. Another speaker reacts similarly and uses exclamation points liberally in her call to action:

Annamarie [redacted] Gee vir ons asseblief n Generaal met n Taktiese Plan!!!! Kom ons bid daarvoor!!!! Hulle hardloop soos kamele op 2 bene en besteel ons in die Nag(sluipmoordenaars!) Kom ons vat hierdie NES van "VIPERS", Satan Gebroedsels AAN!
Hou van · Antwoord · 29 Desember 2016 om 05:59 NM.

206

The speaker above calls for a general with a tactical plan. Invoking military associations. She calls these murderers camels on two legs – presumably speaking of their animal nature – inhumane. She then proceeds to link this to “the will of God” by quoting a scripture about the “brood of vipers” in Matthew 12: 33–38:

²⁰⁴ Trans. “Do you guys remember the days when we could catch the bus at 11h30 at night to go home, a good chat with the bus driver when we went out to dance, how we did window shopping in sunnyside...windows are replaced with industrial steel doors, who is this devil who? who is this spirit of hell?”

²⁰⁵ Trans. “People in the new testament it says in James that ‘there will come a time when you must sell you cloak and buy a sword’ ...why stand back and allow them to kill our people....they push crosses down women’s throats after they are raped and killed, they who have a pitch I (and) screw through the bible and through the boer’s ribcage they’ve just martered, stand up.....remember these things...bring this before the Lord day and night...do this I beg of you, fight with our Father in Heaven we then his children, he our brideg(r)oom, does a husband have to kick his bride and beat her before marriage??? beg plsss”

²⁰⁶Trans. “Annamarie: Give as a General please with a Tactical Plan!!! Let’s pray for this!!!! They run like camels on 2 legs and steal from us at Night (snipers!) Let’s take on this NEST of VIPERS, spawn of Satan!”

“Make a tree good and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognised by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

The verse is taken out of context from scripture to mean something completely different to its original passage which has to do with hypocrisy and the pharisees’ attempts to trick Jesus by asking him questions about the law.



207

Willem also answers above with a call to action. The fact that no one “feels an f...” is limited to “white neighbours”. This is key to many of these posts. The animosity is viewed to be aimed exclusively at white people.

4.4.6 *Mighty Men*

Although the comments in the sections above nostalgically long for the religious values and practices of the “old days” to combat crimes in the present, a new brand of Christian rhetoric is a clear through-line in the group, that of the Mighty Men movement. A strong thread in the group is the discussion surrounding this movement led by farmer-turned-evangelist, Angus Buchan. This Evangelical movement has grown exponentially and has resulted in hundreds of thousands of men gathering for Christian services where themes of Christian masculinity, repentance and traditional family values stand central. Buchan’s theology can be summed up as “a virulent mixture of broad-church Evangelical and neo-Pentecostal Christianity” which “emerged in the wake of post-apartheid South Africa” (Owino 2012: 71). According to Owino (2012: 72), Evangelism “as broadly understood in South Africa is a construct of Christianity emerging from the pietistic stream of the Reformed theological tradition epitomised in the nineteenth-century South African Dutch Reformed Church leader, Andrew Murray (1828–1917)”. Balcomb (2004: 146), cited by Owino 2012: 71) describes its “confessional emphasis” as “primarily upon the forgiveness of sin and personal salvation in Jesus Christ, the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and a life marked by prayer,

²⁰⁷ Trans. “Sorry to hear I personally don’t think anyone feels a F... about his neighbour and co-white neighbour it’s time we stand together and fuck (them) up if necessary”

devotion and practical holiness”. This location of the contemporary evangelical movement as derived from, but distinctly different to that of the Dutch Reformed Church, is of particular importance. The fact that the Dutch Reformed Church publicly supported apartheid and its policies of segregation led to great disillusionment with this institution. Owino (2012: 76) writes that “with the fall of the apartheid regime and the establishment of a new democratic South Africa in April 1994, the theocratic nation (strengthened by supremacist ideologies) established under God was no more”. The white Afrikaner’s relationship to religion is complicated because of the way Christian nationalists used the Dutch Reformed Church and skewed theology to substantiate their claims to racial superiority:

Because Christian nationalists managed to present themselves as the only true representatives of the Afrikaner people²⁰⁸, they were able to conflate political and theological concerns. Opposing apartheid meant opposing not only one’s own people, but also, ultimately, the will of God.

(Vestergaard 2001: 21)

Both Angus Buchan personally and the Mighty Men movement as a whole have been criticized for upholding what is deemed by some to be out-dated values of patriarchy and male superiority.²⁰⁹ Buchan has repeatedly affirmed his stance on gender relationships: the “man is the head of the home” and has also repeatedly asserted his view that homosexuality is a sin. Various media sources and organizations have called for his gatherings to be boycotted. This led to the refusal of a visa to enter Scotland for speaking engagements on the grounds of the country’s legislation on hate speech. This crisis of morality is one that in some ways exemplifies the uncomfortable changes that happened after the fall of apartheid. Vestergaard (2001: 22) explains these changes in the following way:

“Liberal democratic values have replaced the puritanical credo that was so central to apartheid. The easing of censorship, the legalization of abortion, the abolition of the death penalty, and protective laws regarding sexual orientation make the new South African not only more liberal than the apartheid state, but also more liberal than many Western democracies.”

²⁰⁸ I presume by this term Vestergaard means white Afrikaners as she clarifies this term in her other work.

²⁰⁹ See Nadar (2009).

A controversial figure, both within Christian and non-Christian circles, Angus Buchan's reach and influence cannot be overstated. Owino (2012: 72) asserts that "serious note must be taken of the rising magnitude of its gatherings, increasing from 240 men in 2004; 600 attending in 2005; 1, 060 in 2006; 7,500 in 2007; 60,000 plus in 2008; 200,000 delegates in 2009, and as Buchan explains, "acres of men (600,000 plus) in 2010.". Owino's article appeared before the 2017 gathering, "It's Time" in the Bloemfontein area, which drew approximately one million people.

Buchan and the popularity of his gatherings on a group dedicated to the remembrance of the Border War is an interesting phenomenon. Owino (2012: 66) asserts that the Mighty Men movement provides "a significant religious space in which changes in masculinities are taking place, resulting in reconfigured and conflicting models that require examination".

Some of the language employed in the description of these meetings is somewhat troubling. The speaker below posts a photo of a meeting with the following caption:



210

The language employed is troubling in that it evokes imagery of the white Afrikaner as "*volk*"²¹¹ or chosen by God. Ironically, the speaker uses the term "lager" (*laer*), a reference to the "supposed

²¹⁰ Trans. "There was a lager again this past weekend in the North West in our Father's name. The feeling was unbelievable. The sun burnt us but believe me it was a good burn. To be amongst one's own, 'awesome'! (Mighty men's conference)"

²¹¹ e.g. See Vestegaard (2001: 20): "Racial differences have been important in South Africa ever since the first European set foot in the country, but the new Afrikaner nationalists added an ethnic principle to the existing racial categorization by giving the label 'Afrikaner' a new exclusive content. This was represented in the notion of the Afrikaner *volk* – a genuine distinct people with their own *volksgeist* (to use Herder's term), called by God to fulfill its destiny as Christians, as a civilization – as a people."

covenant the Voortrekkers made with God at Bloedrivier (Blood River) on 16 December 1838” (Owino 2012: 75).²¹² The imagery of this is also one of exclusion and of protecting one’s own. This ideology directly contradicts a speaker Owino (2012: 74–75) interviewed at one of these conferences, who readily admitted to the falsehood of these beliefs:

We realise our hands as Afrikaners are full of blood...I am going to tell you something that is quite amazing. White Afrikaners believed we were...chosen by God. If you will go and read the story of ‘Blood River,’ I don’t know if you have ever read that? You see king Shaka came with all his men to fight a sea of Afrikaner, these Boers. Thousands of them died. So, when the Boers won that battle, so they said; “we will build a church for you.” Then they built a church. So, as Afrikaners we walked around with that thing. God, God had given us the victory. So we are the chosen people who can build this nation. But they had to come to a realisation...from the Mighty Men we have to come and ask for forgiveness.

The speaker’s description of the white Afrikaner’s identity as being forged on their being “chosen by God” to defeat a black tribe (the Zulus), speaks not only of racial superiority but also of spiritual superiority. After apartheid, not only the political and personal was democratised, but also the spiritual. Repentance of the sins of the state is compounded with those of the church, sins of exclusion. It is here where many of the men on the group make some of their most passionate pronouncements and engage in some of the fieriest exchanges. Angus Buchan’s teachings hinge greatly on repentance and seeking forgiveness for the sins of the past. Owino (2012: 75) says that there are two distinct elements: Firstly, a dilemma exists between the ‘new form’ of disillusioned White Afrikaner masculinity archetyped in ‘godly manhood’ and secondly, the widely held idea of Afrikaners being the ‘chosen race’ – this understanding provokes a false notion of the racial superiority of the so-called ‘White race.’ These two elements appear to be present in Buchan’s apparent reference to his listeners’ disillusionment towards the political processes that led to the collapse of the apartheid regime beginning in February 1990:

Some of you are seated here tonight and I know that. And you are disillusioned with the church. ‘Angus,’ you say, ‘I put my trust in a man, and he let me down.’ Well, that’s where you made your mistake. You should have put your trust in Jesus. He will never let you

²¹² Owino (2012: 75) asserts that this “led to the establishment of the Afrikaner masculine nation where Afrikaner men believed God gave them the mandate to lead and build South Africa”

down. You say, “I am going to New Zealand; I am going to England; I am going to America.” Your stress will go with you. Your depression will go with you. Your sin will go with you. “What do we do Angus?” You confess it man. The devil will not let you go until you tell him to push off.

(Owino 2012: 75–76)

Buchan speaks to the disillusionment faced by the white Afrikaner when he speaks of how man has “let them down”. Racial reconciliation and repentance stand central to the rhetoric of Angus Buchan. Whilst Buchan is viewed by many in the mainstream media as a symbol of conservative, regressive values, ironically, in the Border War group, some of the members take issue with his message of racial reconciliation and repentance of crimes past. A video was posted on 24 February 2017 by a member of the group in which Angus Buchan called for a day of prayer and repentance over the violence and political turmoil that was plaguing the country at the time. This was answered by Bertus in a very long post filled with overtly racist readings of Biblical texts.



213

After this, he uses scripture at length to justify his stance. He begins by quoting from Genesis saying that as God made Adam in his image, and as Adam is able to blush/become red, he must be white. Only this (white) man has received the breath of God. He then proceeds to quote from Deuteronomy 23:2 to further substantiate why no other people should join in the Christian faith:

Deut. 23 vers 2
Geen baster mag in die vergadering van die Here kom nie, nie eers sy
10 geslag nie. (Vir ewewig)
Met ander woorde jy kan die baster nie eers weer probeer wit teel nie.

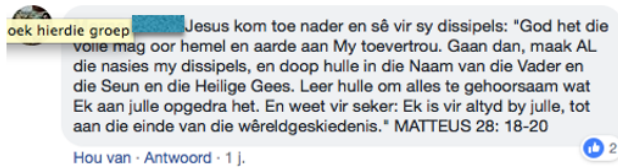
214

The scripture quoted above is, of course, written in the context of a Jewish community where any non-Jewish people would have been considered to be unclean. Traditional, orthodox Christian

²¹³ Trans. “----, you don’t have to lead anyone to our Heavenly Father, the Bible is very clear about this. Our Heavenly Father says he will leave the 99 and will find the 1 that is lost. I’m not knocking Angus Buchan, I’m saying he is a misleader that spreads falsities. Let me explain to you from the scripture.”

²¹⁴ Trans. “Deut. 23: 2 No bastard may enter the presence of the Lord. Not even his or her descendants. (For ever) In other words you can’t even attempt to breed these bastards white.”

theology would contextualise this scripture as one written by the Jewish nation in the Old Testament. This Jewish nation is the chosen people of God and all other nations are doomed. This is, of course, changed after the birth and death of Jesus Christ after which all nations are invited to partake in salvation according to orthodox Christian theology. Muller answers Bertus's post with a scripture reiterating the orthodox view that all nations can be disciples:



215

Muller uses the words of Jesus above to refute the claims of exclusivity made by Oosthuizen. His emphasis on “ALL” nations is refuted again by Bertus, who repudiates his orthodox interpretation of the text with his unique interpretation:



216

The post goes on the postulate that white people form part of this Adamite group as they can “blush”, become red. Thus only the Adamite nations of white origin are chosen by God. The Adamites and descendants of Abraham, according to Oosthuizen, includes white people but exclude those who cannot blush- are black. This incredibly flawed logic is answered by most in the group with a kind of shock and dismay. One group member answers:



217

²¹⁵Trans. “Jesus came closer and said to his disciples: “God has entrusted all power over heaven and earth to me. Go then and make disciples of ALL nations, and baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And know this for sure: I am with you always, till the end of the world’s history.” Matthew 28: 18–20”

²¹⁶Trans.” In the Greek it says “panta ta ta ethne” which would literally mean “all the, these nations”. This means all the specific nations, (ethne - of the same race). These nations are just the Israelites, children of Adam, Adamites, the physical offspring of Adam, Isaac and Jacob.”

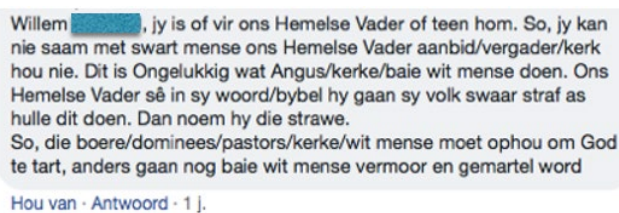
²¹⁷Trans. “Vincent: I cannot believe what I just read. Vilifying Angus for preaching the word of God.

This answer by Flippie directly contradicts the theology prominent in apartheid that Owino (2012: 17) describes as the white Afrikaner believing themselves to be God's chosen people. Flippie places the white Afrikaner's Christian, Protestant roots in its correct historical context: that of being heathens who were only later exposed to the gospel. Other members personally came to the defence of Angus Buchan:



218

The vilification Vincent speaks of is possibly summed up by Bertus's post in which he accuses Buchan of being against God and of bringing judgement upon the white race. This was posted after his initial post caused many members to defend Buchan's inclusive theology, as seen above:



219

Owino (2012: 76) asks whether it could be "that White Afrikaner men interpret their loss of racial control and political dominance as their failure to keep the 'divine task and responsibility' apportioned to them as chosen men of God?" In a sense, Bertus' apocalyptic claims echo this. The perceived volatile position of the white Afrikaner in post-apartheid South Africa is reflected in these conflicting views on race and religion. The fact that many of these discourses are taking place in a space that is supposed to commemorate the Border War might prove that the working out of the white Afrikaner's relationship to religion is interwoven with their making sense of their identity and past. The perceived threats of the new South Africa, violence and economic

Eleanor: I'm also flabbergasted."

²¹⁸ Trans. "Sorry, as much as I want to, I have NO reason to believe that I'm a physical descendant of Abraham. I have reason to believe, however that I might hail from the heathens in Europe that Paul reached with his missionary travels."

²¹⁹ Trans. "Willem - you are either for our Heavenly Father or against him. So, you cannot praise, gather, have church for our Lord with black people. That is unfortunately what Angus/churches/many white people do. Our Heavenly Father says in his word/bible that he will punish his people severely if they do this. He then names the punishments. So the boere/reverends/churches/white people must stop mocking God otherwise many more white people will be murdered and tortured."

uncertainty, have replaced the threats of the old, communism and the threat of the war. The relationship of the men in the group to religion and race is interwoven in many aspects with their meaning-making of the Border War. Owino (2012: 76) sums this relationship of their changing identity up eloquently when he says:

“What is evident among the Mighty Men interviewed is the tension portrayed in the conflicting forms of hegemonic masculinity present among Afrikaners. To be a ‘mighty man’ in the past was supremely demonstrated in terms of conflict, bloodshed and aggressive authoritarianism as used to reassert notions of Afrikaner nationalism ... An alternative ‘mighty man’ for the present day is the ‘godly manhood’ demonstrated by Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and the notion of a recreated ideal Christian manhood through his determination to find reconciliation, forgiveness, and racial harmony in the transition towards a new democratic order in post-1994 South Africa. What the Mighty Men portray in their responses is a conflicting understanding of being ‘mighty men’ against their perception of ‘godly manhood.’”

By observing the group over a period of time, it became clear that some individuals will cling to old notions of masculinity as it was defined during the Border War period where it was demonstrated through conflict and bloodshed. However, it seems that the majority of the speakers in the group vehemently reject these old notions and call for a present day “godly manhood”. Owino (2012: 82) defines this notion of “godly manhood” as reconciliation, forgiveness, and racial harmony. The number of men who share in Angus Buchan’s message of racial harmony on the group proves the conclusion drawn by Owino (2012: 82) in his research on masculine identity in post-apartheid South Africa:

“...the MMC as a space where men can be challenged to remove ‘masculine masks’ and become human beings who respond emotionally is definitely a safe space for Christian men to experience vulnerability for change.”

This vulnerability is especially useful when one considers the plight of the group’s members struggling with symptoms of PTSD and the culture of silence that surrounds this. It would seem that the movement has served in many ways to help veterans make sense of their identity as men after the war. Even though this masculine identity is grounded in arguably harmful patriarchal values, one could argue that the movement still goes a long way towards effecting positive social

change in the white Afrikaner in its efforts to bring about reconciliation and true repentance for deeds past.

4.5 Conclusion

The Facebook group “GRENSOORLOG / Border War 1966-1989” has provided me with a wealth of insight into the discourses surrounding the Border War. As Sannicolos (1997, online) predicts, this SIG has become a “social support network(s) for many”. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, he claims that “there are people within these SIG’s who for whatever reason do not interact much with people in real life.” Although my observation of the group has mostly confirmed Connell et al.’s research on the veterans which showed a “high proportion of respondents with children and in stable family relationships” (2013: 4) indicating healthy social interaction. The lack of interaction Sannicolos (1997, online) speaks of is evident in the questions posed by the children of these veterans. There has obviously been a lack of “safe spaces” to share their memories in the “real world” (Sannicolos 1997, online). The Facebook group has become a virtual space where stories can be shared and remembered without fear of judgement. In many cases, the group is thus a haven for some and a very “positive experience” (Ibid.). The group’s overall rapport is supportive and in many ways, quite therapeutic. An overwhelming amount of men say that the ability to share in a group of their peers has meant the world to them.

Something I found somewhat troubling in the group was the lack of engagement with the meaning of what had happened during the Border War. Very few of the posts or interactions engaged in “meaning- making” of the events in a post-apartheid setting. There was little to no discussion about the Border War’s role in upholding the structures of apartheid or their culpability in protecting and strengthening the old regime²²⁰. As most of these men had been forced by law to serve in the military, the predominant characterisation of the war on the group is to uphold the view that “terrorists aided and abetted by communists were threatening to destroy the white society in the country” (Baines 2008: 219). I also found that a lot of the traumatic incidents discussed by the men had to do with their fellow (white) soldiers and had very little to do with their treatment of the enemy. While most of the plays written about the Border War represent a critical view of the war, “as an extension of the apartheid regime’s powers” (Reddy 2005: 106), evidence found during my observation of the group either opposed this view or ignored it.

²²⁰ I am not implying that the SADF is solely responsible for upholding this system. This would be the other extreme. The military must, however, be viewed as an extension of the hegemonic ruling power of the day.

The place in the group where these negotiations of culpability were most overt was in the posts about religion and the Angus Buchan Mighty Men movement. The negotiation of masculine identity is, in many ways, interwoven with religious identity. The question of what the war meant – or did not mean – is often engaged with through this frame. It would seem that the things of God and the structure of the MMC has aided to initiate these conversations.

Discussions about PTSD and the war's aftermath in the minds of veterans were surprisingly frank. As discussed in the section on this theme, it is evident that there seems to be many men in need of psychiatric care and/or clinical therapy²²¹.

The themes I have been able to identify and analyse online will enable me to compare them with those found in the plays written about the Border War in the previous chapter. I hope to use both the research undertaken in this chapter and in Chapter 3 to frame the play I will write about the Border war.

²²¹ Here I am of course speaking as a researcher and not as a medical or clinical professional.

CHAPTER 5

PERFORMING THE BORDER: A NEW PLAY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will move further down the iterative cyclic web (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) to go on to the next phase where I will “Test the theory empirically or refine the theory/ideas through comparison and argument” (Ibid.). This will, in turn, lead to an output in the form of “a theory or paradigm” (Ibid.). This phase will include a comparison of the themes found in the lineage of practice in Chapter 3 on Border War plays, with the themes found on social media discourses as explored in Chapter 4. This links with Smith & Dean’s description of the process in which the researcher will “test the theory empirically or refine the theory/ideas through comparison and argument” (Ibid.). I will then discuss how the comparison of these themes was explored in *Bloed en Bodem*. It thus also includes the bottom part of the iterative cyclic web and moves from academic research to research-led practice in this phase. This research within the cycle goes in another direction and moves across the iterative cyclic web to the “develop chosen ideas” phase in which the artwork is the output, and the process is documented. The feedback on the newly written play will be included in this chapter. This feedback is summarized as a part of the “theorising of ideas” phase in the cycle (Ibid.).

The format of the chapter begins by giving an overview of the new play, *Bloed en Bodem*, by discussing its plot, characters, title and setting. After this, the play will be discussed as an outflow, reflection and exploration of the above-mentioned research by firstly looking at the thematic comparisons and then reflecting on this by using examples from the text.

5.2 Plot and Characters

Bloed en Bodem is a play about an agricultural student, Jana, who returns home to her family’s farm after her uncle informs her that her father’s mental health has been deteriorating. Boet, Jana’s father, was once a promising leader in his school. After serving in the Border War, however, he is battling with depression and alcoholism. Something happened on the Border where Boet fought

alongside his younger brother, Johan. Something changed him into someone who refuses to talk about the past. When Boet accidentally puts down the wrong lamb, it causes a reaction he has been trying to avoid for years by drinking. When her father fails to fulfil his basic duties, Jana needs to help her uncle on the family's farm. Enele, the foreman's son and Jana's childhood friend, asks her to help him study to better his matric results. He wants to go to university to escape the circumstances on the farm and ultimately to escape the cycle of poverty his family is caught up in. Jana sees this as a golden opportunity to include him in the workings of the farm as a co-owner to avoid the government's attempts to redistribute the land. She thinks that by making him and the workers on the farm part-owners, land appropriation without compensation on the government's part can be avoided. Enele makes use of Jana's services as a tutor but sees through her pragmatic attempts to use him to secure her (white) family's future on the farm. One evening Boet leaves the safety gate open when he goes to the local pub. He leaves Jana alone on the farm. Throughout the play, the threat of a farm attack looms over their home. The unthinkable, yet predictable thing happens when Jana is raped in their home. Jana's uncle, Johan, rapes her. Enele sees the perpetrator, but Jana makes him swear not to reveal his identity as she is convinced that this will be the straw that breaks the camel's back, that her father would not be able to go on knowing his own brother has done this. Boet enters and finds Jana bleeding after having been raped and feels responsible as he had left open the gate when he went out drinking. Boet assumes that the perpetrator was black and goes on a horrible racist rant. Jana does not correct him. He starts treating Enele differently after the attack. After receiving his outstanding matric results, Enele tells Jana that he is leaving the farm after all as he cannot stand the hypocrisy of having to work for her uncle. He tells her that he is done with the farm and that he will make a life for himself in the city. He is done lying on her behalf about the rape. Boet is, however, forced to look after his daughter when she is unable to look after him. He stops drinking and decides to attend a religious crusade for men, Angus Buchan's Mighty Men Conference. After returning from the conference, he breaks down and tells Jana what had happened on the Border. He tells her how he and his brother had been ordered to take out terrorists around an area for which they were given the coordinates. They saw men carrying grenades in the distance running towards them. The sun was in his eyes, and he asked Johan to look – he said they should take them all out. After going to inspect the bodies of the men they had just shot, the brothers saw that the "men" were very young boys. They had avocados in their hands, not grenades. Johan went on to kick the bodies while Boet was shocked that they had killed innocent civilians trying to sell them avocados. Boet reveals that he had repented at the conference for staying silent while his brother committed atrocities and raped local Namibian women. He admits to his culpability as he had stayed silent about his brother's evil.

After this confession to his daughter she finally has the courage to reveal the identity of her rapist. The play ends after Jana tells Boet that his brother had raped her. The audience is left to wonder whether Boet's newfound faith will be enough to forgive this ultimate transgression after having received forgiveness for his own sins.

5.3 Title: *Bloed en Bodem*

The play's title was suggested by the director, Marthinus Basson. My previous play was called *Melk en Vleis*²²² (Albertyn 2019) which was set on a farm (see the next section) and this play would also be set in this politicised space. He suggested a title to echo this: *Bloed en Bodem*²²³. I found the title to be effective as it evokes precisely the kind of dangerous nostalgia I was hoping to address in the play by speaking to the rise of nationalism seen online and the evocation of this in previous Border War plays²²⁴. The title to the Nazi slogan of "Blut und Boden" which the National Socialist Party used during propaganda campaigns that promoted "pure" Arian blood and a German "homeland". This dangerous notion of racial purity was central to the apartheid regime's political ideology. The irony of the title in a South African context is that the white Afrikaner population is primarily of European descent²²⁵. Any claims to a "homeland" in Africa carries significant dramatic irony. Blood and soil being connected because of heritage is also an apt title as the issue of land restitution is central to the play. The fact that the Border War was fought to protect the borders of what soldiers were told was "their own", was shown to be an illusion after 1994. The title works because it illustrates precisely how unstable these concepts of blood (family) and soil (home and land) are. I hope the play subverts the notions of "Blut und Boden" by illustrating how dangerous these ideals can be and how they can be manipulated to rouse men (and women) to fight for unjust causes.

5.4 Setting the Play

²²² Trans. "Milk and Meat"

²²³ Trans. "Blood and Soil"

²²⁴ See Chapter 3.

²²⁵ This notion was propagated by the apartheid government but is mostly an artificial construct as Afrikaans-speaking people classified as "white" under the apartheid government have been shown to share significant Khoi, San and Malay ancestry. It was not uncommon for the early Dutch settlers to marry members of the indigenous population in the Cape. The inverse is thus also true for South Africans classified as "coloured" by the apartheid government who have European ancestors. Significant parallels can be drawn to Caucasian Americans. A state made up of a significant portion of immigrants (although this term is highly malleable and problematic as populations are in flux and not static as is often propagated) that attempts to uphold racial purity is thus shown to be hypocritical at worst, and intellectually weak at best.

In choosing the setting of the play, a farm proved to serve a multi-functional purpose. The farm space has a special significance to the white Afrikaner as their very identity is linguistically tied up with the profession of farming – they are Boere. The farming space also provides one with opportunities to explore prejudices and social dynamics which are not as apparent in an urban setting.⁵ “The golden age of the normative *plaasroman*²²⁶ (between 1900 and 1960) coincides with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the development of apartheid ideology” (Fourie 2011: 16). This was because the *plaasroman* “cast the farm as a space that located the Afrikaner’s history and lineage, concretising nationalist Afrikaner identity and its symbolic bond to the African landscape” (Coetzee 1986: 108–109). In a literary sense, the farm space is also significant in the Afrikaans canon. The *plaasroman* has served as a staple established by the likes of Hettie Smit’s *Sy kom met die sekelmaan* (1940) and modernised by Sestiger, Ettienne le Roux in his ground-breaking novel *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins* (2006). Coetzee (1986: 8) identifies five common traits of the traditional *plaasroman* that will be discussed in regards to its application to and subversion of in the newly written text (Albertyn 2015: 64–65):

1. “There is a close integration between the life of the (extended) family and the economy of the farm” (Coetzee 1986: 8).

There is a great urgency in the play with regards to the father’s (Boet’s) inability to manage the farm and the ultimate threat of losing a farm that has been passed down for three generations. When he is unable to accomplish what is being asked of him, his brother asks his daughter, Jana, to come and help out. Jana questions this and asks why her uncle cannot simply appoint a manager on the farm:

“Jana: Why don’t you just appoint a manager for the farm? I don’t understand why I have to leave my studies...

Johan: A manager and an owner are two very different things.”²²⁷

(Addendum A: 25)

He makes it very clear that a manager will never be able to work with the same vigour and dedication that an heir would. Duty is thus still a great part of the world of the play. The close

²²⁶ Trans. “Farm novel”

²²⁷ Trans. “Jana: Hoekom stel oom nie net nog ‘n plaasbestuurder aan nie? Ek verstaan nie hoekom ek my studies ...
 Johan: ‘n Bestuurder en ‘n eienaar is twee baie verskillende dinge.”

relationship that exists between the brothers is something that is essential to the world of the play and is made possible by the farm setting. They rely on each other, both economically and emotionally. The brothers' close proximity facilitates the ultimate betrayal revealed at the end of the play.

2. "Bonds of attachment exist between people and the soil" (Coetzee 1986: 8).

This specific trait is of the utmost importance in communicating the central themes of the play: the characters' complex relationship with the land. Fourie (2011: 22–23) asserts the following (in Albertyn 2015: 64):

"In light of the issues still felt in South Africa regarding land, most obviously concerning the post-democratisation claims to land unlawfully acquired from previous inhabitants, and the prominent position of land in Afrikaans literature (and other South African literatures), modern versions of the *plaasroman* are quite relevant to the discourse surrounding identity and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa."

In light of the above contestations of space and debate surrounding land, the farm as a space has never been more relevant to the current discourse surrounding race relations and meaning-making of the past. The newly written play attempts to display opposing views of land redistribution and acquisition. In this regard, the character of Enele is especially vital in subverting extreme rightwing ideas about white land ownership and dominance. The character consistently points out the hypocrisy of the current system that has to a large extent kept land out of the hands of the black majority in post-apartheid South Africa. Jana represents a pragmatic approach to agriculture but is willing to sacrifice moral restitution for the ultimate goal of profit and the protection of assets. The character of Johan represents an unwillingness to give up the power that comes along with land ownership and a false sense of entitlement. A modern version of the *plaasroman* (albeit in the form of a play) could mean "subverting Afrikaner colonial, nationalist ideals" (in Albertyn 2015: 64) by questioning and pointing out the white hegemonic sphere of influence that still dominates the farm space in the post-apartheid era.²²⁸

3. "Authority is patriarchal" (Coetzee, 1986: 8).

²²⁸ See Marlene van Niekerk's acclaimed *Agaat* as an example of a postcolonial *plaasroman* that manages to do this with great finesse and insight.

Fourie (2011: 16–17) asserts that the *plaasroman* genre “create[s] patriarchal worlds wherein races, generations and the sexes act according to traditional hierarchies”. Fourie (2011: 18) describes this hierarchal system (in Albertyn 2015: 66) as follows:

“The farmer (white male) signifies the hegemonic power, while the farm woman [sic.] (white female) and to a much greater extent the farm labourer (coloured males or females), signify the subaltern.”

The newly written play in some ways subverts these notions of gender. The only female character, Jana, is shown to be the heir apparent to the farm. The woman as the primary farmer (as opposed to merely being her husband’s aide) is a fairly subversive image and has not been portrayed in traditional *plaasromans*. Even so, her position of power is precarious, and her uncle makes it clear that they did not expect her to become a farmer but instead to marry one.

“Johan: I think maybe your dad thought you’d get married and that the guy would take over the whole thing. When you went to study agriculture we were kind of bowled over.”²²⁹

(Addendum A 24)

Although she has had the freedom to choose her profession, it is made clear that this was not what was expected from her, nor the norm. Her rape, the moment of crisis in the play, in many ways shows how precarious her situation is as a woman. Although she is seemingly free to choose her way materially, concerning her profession, the underlying toxic masculinity that motivates and justifies her uncle’s actions, limits her future by traumatising her and claiming her body through rape. The power dynamics of gender is still skewed. In many ways it represents the current state of affairs in South Africa. Although many (not all) women enjoy equal rights and access to privilege, they are not free to access the same spaces as men because of high crime rates. Women are often told not to stay out at night, or to avoid dangerous spaces as the threat of rape looms over contemporary South African communities.

“Boet: That’s safer. You don’t want to leave a woman alone on a farm.”²³⁰

²²⁹ Trans. “Johan: Ek dink dalk jou pa het gedink jy sou trou en dat die knaap die storie sou oorneem. Toe jy gaan landbou swot het, het jy ons eintlik albei uitgeboul.”

²³⁰ Trans. “Boet: Dis veiliger. Mens wil nie ‘n vrou alleen op die plaas laat ...”

(Addendum A 78)

Women choosing to access these spaces and getting raped in the process, are often blamed for “a lack of common sense” in wanting to access spaces men so easily do.²³¹ When it comes to portraying the power dynamics of race, however, the newly written play, unfortunately, shows how little this has changed since the conception of the traditional *plaasromans*. Nevertheless, the new text does subvert the morality of this system mainly through the character of Enele. His ultimate act of emancipation from the farm space disrupts the hegemonic power of his white owners. He is the first generation of the subaltern that they have become reliant on (because of the precarious political situation concerning land) which indicates that these power dynamics are gradually becoming destabilised. In this sense the newly written play reflects both the fact that, unfortunately, much is still the same in terms of the farm space in traditional *plaasromans*, but also how these dynamics are, hopefully, gradually being subverted.

4. “Marriage is looked upon as a universal life goal. Marriages tend to take place early and within the district. They are often arranged” (Coetzee 1986: 8).

The fourth characteristic mentioned by Coetzee echoes the third. As mentioned in the earlier section about patriarchy, the female character of Jana both confirms and subverts her traditional gender role. The character of Jana is not shown to have any kind of romantic interest in the play. In this sense, she subverts the expectations of a female character in the farm space as her primary focus is on her work (studies) and not on her reproductive role to “start a family”. The play shows how there have been some gains for women in contemporary South Africa. However, these gains are also shown to be superficial as the toxic masculinity that causes her uncle to rape her and that shames her into silence, contradicts this. The single woman alone on the farm is raped. Although she is not subjected to an arranged marriage and can choose to forge her own path, the brand of masculinity that has poisoned her father’s generation is still her burden to bear. Her agency is thus still limited.

5. “The community is culturally homogeneous” (Coetzee 1986: 8)

The community portrayed in the newly written play includes characters from two distinct cultural groups, the Tswana – represented by Enele’s character – and the white Afrikaner – Boet’s family.

²³¹ See “victim blaming”

This trait is subverted in the play to represent the changes that have occurred after 1994. Although the community portrayed is not culturally homogenous, it is important to note that Enele is singular in his situation. He is the first black man the family includes in their “inner circle”. Cultural heterogeneity is thus shown to be the exception. In this way the play also reflects how little has changed in this space since the country’s transition to democracy. The character of Johan is outright racist whereas Boet’s character is sincere in his attempts to bring about reconciliation and a form of restitution. He chastises Jana when she motivates that her attempt at bringing about restitution is fueled by a fear of losing land and thus power:

“Jana: We’ll be left with nothing if we don’t start making changes.

Boet: You’re starting to sound like him [Johan]. You have to do it because it’s the right thing to do.”²³²

(Addendum A: 53)

I did not want to write a purely virtuous female victim in the character of Jana. In her review of the play, Lida Krüger writes the following about Jana:

“Although the play portrays Jana in a sympathetic light, she is also not shown through rose coloured lenses. Her bursary for Enele is ultimately self-serving.”²³³

(Krüger 2018, online)

Boet is shown to be forward-thinking and open to reconciliation, but after Jana is raped, his behaviour changes. By not telling the truth about her uncle, Jana has allowed her father to be misled by his own prejudice as he presumes she was raped by a stranger – a black man. The assumption that the rapist/criminal is black is not even questioned by Boet. The trauma of his daughter’s rape exposes underlying preconceived ideas about what the profile of a rapist would be. He starts behaving differently towards Enele whom he previously championed. After Enele enters the scene where he finally leaves the farm, Boet ignores him and rudely leaves the room. This is in contrast to earlier scenes where he proudly greets Enele and brags about him as one would about a son. Jana apologises to Enele about her father’s behaviour:

²³² Trans. “Jana: Ons gaan niks oorhou as ons nie veranderinge maak nie.

Boet: Jy klink soos hy. ‘n Man moet dit doen want dis die regte ding om te doen.”

²³³ Trans. “Hoewel die stuk dus vir Jana op ‘n simpatieke manier uitbeeld, word sy ook nie deur rooskleurige lense gesien nie. Haar beurs vir Enele is uiteindelik selfdienend.”

“Jana: I’m so sorry! I don’t know what’s gotten into him.
 Enele: You know perfectly well.
 Jana: What?
 Enele: I’m the black man who raped his daughter.
 Jana: He knows it’s not you!
 Enele: Oh but we’re all the same.
 Jana: My dad has never been like that. He’s always cared about you.
 Enele: He used to care. You and your uncle. You’re just using me.”²³⁴
 (Addendum A 81–82)

This accusation on Enele’s part is the first the audience sees of Enele’s defiance against their attempts at restitution. Before this, Enele largely remains aloof and puts off making a final decision about their various proposals to “uplift” him. I wrote the character of Jana to exemplify a kind of raw pragmatism in a younger generation of white Afrikaners. This pragmatism wants the country to “just move on” and claims to want to ensure food security, but it is in many ways guilty of ignorance at best, and an unwillingness to let go of power at worst. I wanted to show how politically correct speech can often hide deeply held prejudices. Jana has a racist outburst after her rape when Enele tries to get her to tell her father that Johan is the rapist:

“Jana: Promise me you won’t tell
 Enele: How the hell am I supposed to ...
She cries
 Jana! Fine. I’ll keep quiet. But if he ... if he does it again I’ll ...
 Jana: He won’t. You have to go now.
 Enele: I can’t leave with you looking like this!?
 Jana: (*screaming*) Leave! Leave my house this instant! What are you still doing here? This has nothing to do with you!

²³⁴ Trans. “Jana: Ek’s jammer. Ek weet nie wat fout is met hom nie.
 Enele: Jy weet goed.
 Jana: Wat?
 Enele: Ek is ’n swarte wat sy dogter verkrag het.
 Jana: Hy weet dis nie jy nie!
 Enele: Maar ons is maar almal dieselfde.
 Jana: My pa was nooit so nie. Hy gee om vir jou.
 Enele: Hy het omgee. Jy en jou oom. Julle gebruik my.”

Enele: It has! You're my...
 Jana: You're what? I'm your boss's²³⁵ daughter! Fuck off!"²³⁶
 (Addendum A 63)

This accusation culminates near the end of the play when Enele finally refuses Jana and her family's help as he cannot reconcile his values with their hypocrisy:

"Enele: I know why you suddenly want to hand out shares. After all these years.
 Jana: Please! Can we speak later I...
 Enele: No. Its time. You expect me to be a part of this farm? I have to sit next to your uncle on a bakkie every day. My father sits in the back. I have to look at your uncle fat fingers on the wheel. The same hands that...that my sister... because you are my sister- even though you think you're the boss's daughter. And you refuse to talk. And I also have to keep quiet. Do you realise your father hasn't looked me in the eyes since that day? He pretends I don't exist."²³⁷

(Addendum A: 82)

It was especially important to me in the play that Enele save himself and that he would not be the recipient of well-meant white upliftment. I felt for the purposes of this play that his character cannot continue to exist in the farm space on the white characters' terms. He exits as a kind of Nora character to emancipate himself from the farm space. This emancipation is on his own terms

²³⁵ The Afrikaans word for boss has a demeaning implication in the context of apartheid. "Baas" was used as the address for white people by non-white South Africans.

²³⁶ Trans. "Jana: Sweer jy? Belowe jy sal stilbly?

Enele: Hoe de hel moet ek ...

Sy huil.

Jana! Fine. Ek sal stilbly. Maar as hy ... as hy weer ...

Jana: Hy sal nie. Jy moet nou gaan.

Enele: Ek kan nie gaan as jy so lyk nie ...

Jana: (skree) Loop! Loop uit my huis uit! Wat soek jy nog hier? Dit het niks met jou uit te waai nie!

Enele: Dit het! Jy's my ...

Jana: Jou wat? Ek's jou baas se dogter! Fokkof!"

²³⁷ Trans. "Enele: Ek weet hoekom julle skielik aandeel wil uitdeel. Na al die jarre.

Jana: Asseblief! Kan ons 'n ander tyd hieroor...

Enele: Nee. Dis tyd. Jy verwag ek moet deel wees van hierdie plaas? Ek moet elke dag langs jou oom in 'n bakkie sit. My pa sit agterop. Ek moet kyk vir sy vet vingers op die stuur. Dieselfde hande wat ... wat my suster ... Want jy is my suster- al dink jy jy's die baas se dogter. En jy weier om te praat. En ek moet ook stilbly. Besef jy jou pa het my nog nie in die oë gekyk van daai dag af nie? Hy maak of ek nie bestaan nie."

and he rejects the advances of the white characters to involve him in the running of the farm. He sees that Jana's pragmatism is ultimately self-serving and not motivated by a desire for authentic restitution.

5.5 Themes

The research undertaken in Chapters 3 and 4 has led me to write a new play that reflects how the themes from the plays on the Border and the themes found in online discourses intersect and how they diverge. I have created a table to illustrate these findings, and that sums up the main points of divergence, overlapping and correlation. Some of the themes that overlap have been grouped together to create a kind of dialogue:

Correlation of themes found in online discourses and Border War performances

	Themes from plays	Themes from online discourse	Relation of themes
1	PTSD	PTSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correlation of themes dealt with by both the plays and found online, it is talked about much less online than in the plays
2	Fathers & sons	Questioning fathers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correlation of themes those from plays more cynical than those found online voices of children much stronger online than on stage
3	Blame for older generation of generals	When things were better Remembrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> divergence of political meaning-making some overlapping, remembrance of war experiences and life on the border exist in both spheres remembrance online more nostalgic than the plays discussed (apart from <i>Tree Aan!</i>)

4	Forgotten, Angry, Confused & Endangered	A call to arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> although rhetoric differs, some themes overlap the political motivation online is of a dangerous nature whereas those on stage (mostly) fit in with post-apartheid values of tolerance
5	Female Perspective		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> little to no overlapping, very little is said about the experiences of women during the war online
6	Homosexuality		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> little to no overlapping, very little is said about the experiences of gay men during the war online
7		Mighty men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Mighty Men movement and its evangelical base has not been explored in depth in plays on the Border War

1. PTSD

Both the plays and the discourses online deal with what is arguably the most severe after-effect of the war on] veterans, namely PTSD. The thread mentioned in Chapter 3 regarding the plays dealing with PTSD (Leach's *Die Spinner*, Steyn's *Johnny is nie Dood nie* and Greig Coetzee's *White men with weapons*), the refusal to be "fixed by psychology", is one that was confirmed by the online discourses on the topic. In this sense, the online discourse substantially confirms the way the plays tend to deal with the after-effects of the war. I tried to portray this in the newly written play by excluding any "psychology talk". I purposefully excluded any emotional "confessionals" until the very last scene. I wanted to portray a culture of masculinity where emotional issues are circumvented by talking about the pragmatic, the tactile e.g. farming. I wanted the dialogue to avoid enquiries of emotion and for the older characters, the brothers, to make light of, or even mock any attempt at a serious discussion about their inner worlds. In an interview with *Litnet*, the play's director, Marthinus Basson, comments on this:

"This play offers new challenges. The characters are not necessarily schooled in the language of confession or emotional insight. They are basic, sometimes blunt and communicate in clichéd phrases. As with all good Calvinists, confession is reserved for

the closet. And important matters are not discussed. It makes it difficult for the actors, but wonderful when it works.”²³⁸

(Van Eeden 2018, online)

It was also clear from the online discourse that the symptoms of PTSD were not at all universal or an automatic after-effect of military conscription and that the experiences were highly individualised. I tried to show how extreme the variance can be in the experience of PTSD depending on the individual. By writing about two brothers with similar experiences and making one suffer from severe symptoms of PTSD, but the other entirely immune to the psychological impact of trauma,²³⁹ the audience is exposed to how varied the impact of war has been on its veterans. Jana asks her uncle why her father is struggling so much when they both went through the same traumatic experiences.

“Jana: You were there together. What happened that was so bad? Why is it bothering him so much?

Johan: God knows Jaans. I saw the same things your dad saw. Every man handles these things differently.”²⁴⁰

(Addendum A: 21)

This varied experience among veterans also stretches to morality and feelings of guilt. I also think it would be untruthful to exclude the role of morality from a discussion about the portrayal of PTSD. The majority of cases I found discussed online, surrounding the Border War and its traumatic effect on veterans, had to do with feelings of guilt or shame. The traumatic event as neutral, e.g. seeing a friend blown to pieces, was less often discussed as causing trauma than examples whereby the veteran had to make some kind of moral decision, e.g. making a call about whether to attack or not, or the impact of the war on civilians. It would seem from my observations that much of the traumatic event’s poison stems from the individual’s moral accountability e.g. was it my fault? This relationship of morality to trauma is a trait of perpetrator trauma.

²³⁸ Trans. “Hierdie stuk bied nuwe uitdagings. Die karakters is nie noodwendig geskool in die taal van bekentenis of emosionele insig nie. Hulle is basies, soms bot en kommunikeer in halwe sinne en geykte frases. Soos vir alle goeie Calviniste is bier vir die binnekamer. En belangrike goed word nooit oor gepraat nie. Dit is moeilik vir die akteurs, maar heerlik, wanneer dit werk.”

²³⁹ It is important to note that, whilst Johan is clearly immune to symptoms of PTSD with regard to the war, he might not be psychologically immune to its toxic ideas about masculinity. His exposure to this environment might have heightened his psychopathic (antisocial personality) disposition which ultimately resulted in the rape of his brother’s daughter.

²⁴⁰ Trans. “Jana: Julle was saam daar. Wat het gebeur wat so erg is? Hoekom pla dit hom so?

Johan: Nee die vet weet Jaans. Ek en jou pa het dieselfe goed gesien. Elke ou vat die goed seker anders.”

2. Fathers and sons / Questioning fathers

There is a strong correlation of the section on “Fathers and sons” in plays written on the Border War and the section, “Questioning fathers” in my observation of the online discourse. I was surprised by the number of children who had questions on the Facebook group. These questions are very pertinent and are not all reflected in the plays written on the Border War thus far. The only play that features a prominent voice from the second generation, i.e. a son whose father is a veteran, is *Bos* (2012) by Malan Steyn. Steyn wrote an excellent play on masculinity and contemporary white Afrikaner identity and the impact of the Border War on this. The absence of other plays that deal with this issue is a void that could be filled by a new play to engage in an important discourse started by Steyn. I have tried to voice this through the character of Jana. I found the voices of veterans’ children to be quite prominent online. The three aspects of children’s voices are summed up in chapter three: questions, commemoration and honour. The most pertinent aspect to my mind were the questions as they reflected the father’s silence. The character of Jana tries to understand the extent of her father’s past throughout the play. She knows subconsciously that this had contributed to her father’s alcoholism and mental deterioration:

“Johan: Ag Jaans ... Your dad has things in his past that bother him ... I don’t know ...
 Jana: You were there with him (...) ... Uncle Johan – you were with him on the Border.
 Johan: Ah Lord child. That’s ages ago.
 Jana: Clearly it’s not that far back for him. It sounds like he’s there every evening.”²⁴¹

(Addendum A: 20)

Jana speaks about her father’s symptoms of PTSD in the passage above trying to understand from her uncle how he seems unscathed whilst his brother is suffering mentally. The implication is also that Jana has to travel there with him every evening. She is involuntarily exposed to her father’s

²⁴¹ Trans. “Johan: Ag Jaans ... jou pa het nog altyd dinge in sy verlede wat hom skeel ... ek weet nie ...
 Jana: Oom was saam met hom daar (...) ... oom was saam met hom op die Grens.
 Johan: Ag jirre kind dis jarre gelede.
 Jana: Dis duidelik nie vir hom so ver terug nie. Dit klink of hy elke aand daar is.”

past. Whereas Jana wants to understand her father's past, her uncle wants to avoid going into too much detail about past events that resulted in his brother's illness:

- “Johan: You've got to move on. You can't just keep thinking and thinking and thinking. If a man thinks too much the thinking turns to drinking.
- Jana: He never spoke to me about it. All I know about it is what I hear him scream in his sleep.
- Johan: When he's had one too many he loves telling Border stories.
- Jana: Not to me he doesn't.
- Johan: You're his child. And you're a woman.”²⁴²
- (Addendum A: 20–21)

I tried to represent the distance between the father and the daughter. Even though a warm familial bond exists between them, there are many things left unsaid on the father's part. The character of Boet stays silent because of the shame and guilt he feels about what had happened on the Border. His brother's explanation – that his silence is because of their closeness – illustrates this contradiction: i.e. because I love you I don't want to expose you to my past. The irony is of course that the more he tries to hide this (his past) the more it starts to seep through. The climax, when Jana gets raped, demonstrates his failure to protect her from his past. That which he thinks he has failed to protect her from “the other” ironically turns out to be his own brother. The ending of the play closes this circle when the whole truth of his brother's actions is revealed to him. His silence, indirectly, leads to his daughter's rape. Although this metaphor is not meant to be interpreted this directly and will hopefully be seen in a more nuanced light, the audience realises by implication that, by the father's imposed silence and culture of silence, Jana adopts this by swearing Enele to silence – he had made his offspring suffer.

3. **Blame** for an older generation of generals / When things were better

²⁴² Trans. “Johan: Ou moet aanbeweeg. Jy kan nie gaan staan en dink en dink en dink nie. As n man te veel oor daai tyd dink verander die dink gou in drink.

Jana: Hy't nooit met my daaroor gepraat nie. Al wat ek daarvan weet is die goed wat hy in sy slaap skree.

Johan: As hy 'n dop in het praat hy lekker grensstories.

Jana: Nie voor my nie.

Johan: Jy's sy kind. En jy's 'n vrou.

The themes found in Chapters 3 and 4 discussed under the headings above, diverge at the point of their “meaning-making” of the events that occurred and led up to the war. The “blame for an older generation of generals” found in many of the plays does not feature as prominently on the discourses surrounding the war online where veterans exchange views. The veterans online were much more forgiving in their assessment of the war and of the leaders that constructed the battle. Their retrospective analysis of the events is viewed in a nostalgic light and contrast with the bitterness towards the generals (older generation of leaders) discussed in Chapter 3. In the newly written play, I wanted to show this tension between men who view their conscription as a time “when things were better” and those who “blame an older generation of generals” for the worst period of their lives.

“Johan: Gosh Boet! Natal? Last time you went that far from the farm was when you went to the Border.

Boet: Thank God that’s done.

Johan: It was the best time of our lives.

Boet glares at him.

Boet: Maybe of your life. It was hell. The things we saw there...that they...that we did...”²⁴³

(Addendum A: 76)

The contrast between their analysis of their time on the Border is meant to illustrate the tensions that exist between different the two groups of thinking. I purposely made the two brothers’ experiences on the Border very similar²⁴⁴ to illustrate how different individuals come to different conclusions surrounding the meaning of these events. Whereas Boet comes to some insight regarding his culpability in upholding an unjust system, Johan is blinded by his a warped view of the past that results in what Krüger (2013: 437) calls “restorative nostalgia”²⁴⁵ that refuses to take responsibility for any wrongdoing:

“Johan: Ah Boet! We were young man. We didn’t know what we were doing.

²⁴³ Trans. “Johan: Heng Boet! Natal? Laas wat jy so ver van die plaas was is toe ons Grens toe is.

Boet: Goddank dis verby.

Johan: Dit was die beste jare van ons lewens.

Boet gluur hom aan.

Boet: Van jou lewe dalk. Dit was hel. Die dinge wat ons daar gesien het ... wat hulle ... wat ons gedoen het ...”

²⁴⁴ See the last scene of the newly written play for Boet’s detailed monologue of their experiences.

²⁴⁵ See Chapter 1.

Boet: Bullshit! We knew what we were doing. We knew about right and wrong.
 Johan: How were we supposed to know the ter's would later become the heroes
 and us the enemies? We were just obedient. It's not our fault."²⁴⁶

(Addendum A: 76)

The play's climax at the end – when Boet finally comes to terms with the far-reaching implications of his actions – should illustrate the complexity of coming to terms with the truth. The fact that he realises his own brother betrayed him – that the enemy was not “the other” but his “own” – is made even more complex by his daughter's final revelation. He ultimately accepts this version of the past and rejects a romanticised nostalgic version of his time on the Border.

4. Forgotten, Angry, Confused & Endangered / A call to arms

The themes discussed online in Chapter 4 were summed up as “a call to arms”. A lot of this was of a potentially dangerous political orientation. Although the political rhetoric differs, some themes discussed by the veterans online in this section overlap with those in plays on the Border War discussed in Chapter 3 in the section “forgotten, angry, confused and endangered”. The political motivation of the themes in the online section often underscores an extreme right-wing narrative whereas those discussed in the section about the themes found on stage (mostly) fit in with post-apartheid values of tolerance.²⁴⁷ The “call to arms” online in some ways subverts the narrative that the Border War has ended. This stream of thinking would postulate that, because of the extreme violence in contemporary South Africa, that the country is still waging a kind of war²⁴⁸. I wanted to reflect these ideas in the public domain in a way that subverts them and undermines their legitimacy whilst not denying their existence in the minds of veterans and within conservative subcultures. I felt it was important to voice these ideas, as offensive as they may be, because to deny that they have a following would be to further participate in a culture that stays silent about toxicity. To voice them without subversion would be to provide a platform for dangerous political ideas – an irresponsible act on the part of the artist. In reflecting on these controversial ideas, I felt that simply reflecting the ideals expressed by this sphere of the public would be reckless, especially

²⁴⁶ Trans. “Johan: Ag boet ons was jonk man. Ons het nie geweet wat ons doen nie.

Boet: Jy praat kak. Mens weet wat jy doen. Mens weet van reg en verkeerd.

Johan: Hoe moes ons geweet het die terrs sou later die helde wees en die ons was die vyand? Ons was net gehoorsaam.
 Dis nie ons skuld nie.”

²⁴⁷ The exception to this being Opperman's *Tree Aan!* (Attention!) (2013).

²⁴⁸ See the discussion on the supposed white genocide in Chapter 4.

since the audience would probably include a great number of veterans and sustain individuals with destructive beliefs.

Although the artist should never simplify matters by falling into the trap of preaching or didactics, serious critical reflection on views expressed by the public is crucial for meaningful engagement. Marthinus Basson, the director of the newly written play, comments on this in an interview on *Litnet* (2018, online) about the process of the production. He says: “I don’t think theatre that preaches belongs on stage”.²⁴⁹ Barone and Eisner (2011: 128) writes:

“...there is a clear danger for arts based inquirers in approaching issues of the political in social research, using an approach that may not be seen as ethical. This is the danger of becoming ideologues, advocates, partisans, and propagandists in their striving to avoid becoming political eunuchs. This is the danger that arts based researchers, in their dedication to eradicate cruelties, may become strident, exclusionary, monologic and authoritative – and therefore off-putting to readers and self-defeating. This is the danger that arts based researchers may (to paraphrase Sartre [1988]), in their zeal to make history, forget to make art.”

I thus wanted to be honest about the ideas being entertained in the public domain whilst subverting them through the way the plot is structured. In her review of the play, Deborah Steinmar (2018, online) writes about Jana:

“Her uncle warns her against the “black danger”, but as is often the case, the true danger is closer to home – amidst the white Afrikaans patriarchy – a viper in one’s own bosom”.²⁵⁰

This subversion of the audience’s expectations about who the true “enemy” is, is key to also subverting the ideas postulated by the online community while, at the same time, also not ignoring their subsistence even after apartheid. The idea that the war is ongoing and that white South Africans are becoming “extinct”, is mainly perpetuated by Johan:

²⁴⁹ Trans. “Ek dink teater wat preek, hoort nie op die verhoog nie”

²⁵⁰ Trans. “Haar oom waarsku teen die swart gevaar, maar soos dit so dikwels die geval is, skuil die werklike gevaar in die geledere van die wit Afrikaanse patriargale bestel; ‘n slang in eie boesem.

“Johan: What do you want us to do? Must we subdivide the farm like communists? Your father and I fought hard so that that wouldn’t happen and look where we are now”.²⁵¹

(Addendum A: 30)

He also frequently uses derogatory language and racist phrases to represent the views of the discourses found in this section online. As stated before, however, I found it necessary to subvert these views through irony and contrasting views throughout the play, thereby not providing a platform for uncritical thinking and prejudice. One of the key instances of this happening is when Jana tries to convince him to transform the farm with the labourers as shareholders:

“Johan: You can’t just give away something to a man he hasn’t worked for. It’s wrong.

Jana: I understand uncle Johan. But Enele’s great grandfather came to the farm with oupa Neels. They worked alongside us. Sometimes they worked longer and harder. I don’t know how much they were paid. People say Oupa Neels was a bad man.”²⁵²

(Addendum A: 27)

His protestation that the labourers have not worked for their share of the farm is subverted by Jana’s retelling of the family’s history. Right after Johan tells Jana that she will be taking over the farm and that they need her help, she proposes that they involve Enele. To this, Johan replies that Enele is still “wet behind the ears” (Addendum A: 29). The irony of this, is highlighted by Jana who says “he’s as old as I am” (Addendum A: 29). She goes on to motivate Enele as a candidate on the basis of his intelligence and social skills, but this is also rejected by Johan:

“Johan: He didn’t get exemption in matric to get into university. How do you want him to farm?

Jana: But uncle...you also didn’t...I mean...

She counts her words. She realises she’s on dangerous territory.

²⁵¹ Trans. “Johan: Nou wat wil jy hê moet ons doen? Moet ons die plaas onderverdeel soos kommuniste? Ek en jou pa het hard baklei dat dit nie gebeur nie en kyk waar sit ons nou.

²⁵² Trans. “Johan: Mens kan mos nie vir ’n ou iets weggee wat hy niks aan gewerk het nie. Dis verkeerd.
Jana: Ek besef oom. Maar Enele se oupagrootjie het saam met oupa Neels hier aangekom. Hulle het saam met ons gewerk. Soms langer en harder. Ek weet ook nie hoeveel hy hul vergoed het nie. Die mense sê hy was maar ’n kwaai ou.”

...were you in university? Not that it's...

Johan: That's very different...I grew up...my father and my grandfather...

Johan realises that his argument has no merit. He gives up.

Ag you know what I mean."²⁵³

(Addendum A 29–30)

The irony in the passage above is overt and aims to subvert Johan's claims to dominance and the narrative that the only reason for his landownership is because of hard work on his ancestor's part.

5. Female perspective

The themes discussed during the close readings of the plays on the Border War under the category, "the female perspective", were largely absent during my observation of the online discourse of veterans. Very little was said online about the experiences of women during the war. Narratives involving women were almost exclusively told by male voices or by the children of the veterans, e.g. a young man would lament the fact that his mother had been widowed by the war. In Chapter 4, there was also an instance of a daughter who honoured her father and posted pictures of him on her wedding day. I chose a female character to represent the second generation – a daughter of a Border War veteran. This subverts ideas about masculine legacy and expectations of patriarchal grandeur and heirs. In white Afrikaner culture, as with many ancient cultures, the eldest son inherits both the grandfather's name and the family's farm. The fact that a daughter is Boet's sole heir subverts the audience's expectations. Johan speaks about how her career choices were unexpected:

"Johan: I think maybe your dad thought you'd get married and that your husband would take over (the farm). When you went to study agriculture, you totally bowled us over.

²⁵³ Trans. "Johan: Hy't dan nie vrystelling gekry nie. Hoe wil jy hê moet hy boer?

Jana: Maar oom, oom het mos ook nie ... ek bedoel ...

Sy tel haar woorde. Sy besef sy speel op Avbob se stoep.

... was oom op universiteit? Nie dat dit ...

Johan: Dis baie anders. Ek het grootgeword ... my pa en my oupa ...

Johan besef sy argument dra geen water nie. Hy gryp na lug en gee dan op.

Ag jy weet wat ek bedoel."

Jana: I've always helped on the farm though. I don't understand why it was such a shock.

Johan: No no you're right you're right. You dad and I are old-fashioned man. In your aunt's day you would've become a nurse or a teacher. And you're sure a lovely girl- I thought you would've tied the knot in you first year and dropped out.”²⁵⁴
(Addendum A 24)

Johan's predictions about her future are subverted by Jana's life choices. Although he celebrates this superficially – “I don't think you need a man”²⁵⁵ (Addendum A 25) – he justifies this statement by the following:

“Johan: But I don't think you need a man. You've got your dad and me to look after you. You can do what you want...”²⁵⁶
(Addendum A 25)

His justification for her supposed independence is underscored by their patriarchal oversight. Johan also subconsciously emphasizes Jana's place and the confines of that which he deems to be her work. When her father passes out after coming home drunk and wets his pants, her uncle comes in during the process of her cleaning him up. After greeting, he sees her struggling to pick him up to take him to bed:

“Jana: We probably need to get him into bed. I tried but...
Johan: No Jaans. That's not a woman's job. I'll take him to his room. Why don't you make us a cup of coffee.”²⁵⁷
(Addendum A 15)

²⁵⁴Trans. “Johan: Ek dink dalk jou pa het gedink jy sou trou en dat die knaap die storie sou oorneem. Toe jy gaan landbou swot het, het jy ons eintlik albei uitgeboul.

Jana: Ek het altyd gehelp en geboer oom. Ek verstaan nie hoekom dit so skok was nie.

Johan: Nee nee jy's heeltemal reg. Ek en jou pa is maar outyds man. In die tannie se tyd het jy of 'n nurse of 'n onderwyser geword. En jy's so oulike girl ek het gedink jy sou in jou eerstejaar al afhaak en opskop.”

²⁵⁵ Trans. “maar ek dink nie jy kort 'n man nie”

²⁵⁶ Trans. “Johan: Maar ek dink nie jy kort 'n man nie. Ek en jou pa is mos hier om na jou te kyk. Jy kan als doen wat jy wil...”

²⁵⁷ Trans. “Jana: Ons moet hom seker in die bed kry. Ek het probeer maar...”

Johan: Nee Jaans. Dis nie 'n vrou se werk nie. Ek sal hom nou vat. Slaan jy eers vir ons 'n ou boeretrosie aan.”

Johan wants to define the boundaries of what she can do by defining what a woman's job is. He also wants to define the boundaries of where she can go. In a society where rape is as rife as it is in South Africa, women possibly become a symbol of vulnerability to be protected by men. There is also the suggestion of vulnerability. When she asks her uncle about why her father does not talk to her about the events that took place during his conscription, he answers:

“Johan: You're his child. And you're a woman.” ²⁵⁸

(Addendum A: 20–21)

Johan implies that she needs to be protected from his (Boet's) masculine world. The irony of the play is, of course, that she does not want to reveal the identity of her perpetrator to him as she wants to protect his fragile psyche. When Enele exclaims that she needs to report her uncle so that he can go to jail, the following exchange ensues:

“Jana: But then my father will know.

Enele: And?

Jana: He won't make it. He'll shoot himself. I swear.

Enele: No! You have to talk!

Jana: It would break him.” ²⁵⁹

(Addendum A 61)

In an attempt to protect him, she upholds the world that has damaged her. In her review of the play's performance at Aardklop, Deborah Steinmar (2018, online) writes of this world:

²⁵⁸ Trans. “Johan: 'n Ou moet aanbeweeg. Jy kan nie gaan staan en dink en dink en dink nie. As 'n man te veel oor daai tyd dink verander die dink gou in drink.

Jana: Hy't nooit met my daaroor gepraat nie. Al wat ek daarvan weet is die goed wat hy in sy slaap skree.

Johan: As hy 'n dop in het praat hy lekker grensstories.

Jana: Nie voor my nie.

Johan: Jy's sy kind. En jy's 'n vrou.”

²⁵⁹ Trans. “Jana: Maar dan gaan my pa weet.

Enele: En?

Jana: Hy gaan nie dit maak nie. Hy sal homself skiet. Ek sweer.

Enele: Nee! Jy moet sê.

Jana: Dit sal hom breek.”

“Women are mute victims that stay silent to protect men and to uphold the patriarchy, out of misplaced propriety.”²⁶⁰

Jana not only represents the second generation, the children of the Border War, as a group that has been kept in the dark about their fathers’ trauma and culpability, she also represents the women who have largely been excluded from the war’s contemporary discourse. Often these women are left to pick up the pieces left in the wake of war. A hyper-violent society with a generation of men that have been militarised often means that the women in that society are left in a precarious place. As Steinmar (2018, online) rightly points out, however, Jana is not blameless in her support and defines of her ancestors’ world. As Krüger (2018, online) writes in her review of the play: “...she is not seen through rose-tinted lenses”²⁶¹. It was important to me that I do not portray the female character without agency. She chooses to remain silent and eventually to talk. The end of the play emphasizes this agency. Through her revelation of her uncle as the perpetrator, she reclaims her voice. She chooses to break the cycle and climate of silence established by her father and uncle. She chooses to speak the truth. In some ways she becomes a hero in that the men in this world need an outsider, the woman, and “the other”, Enele, to free them from the past. Enele pressures her and ultimately rejects the world she upholds through her participation and cover-ups. After this confrontation, the events are set in motion that makes her reconsider her silence. The decision to speak the truth, as Steinmar (2018, online) so eloquently writes in her description of the play, is the start (hopefully) of reconciliation:

“It is, as the title reveals, about land and violence²⁶², about the skeletons of the past and about how the only bit of hope for a splinter of healing or reconciliation is to shine the daylight on oozing bones.”²⁶³

6. Homosexuality

Although homosexuality was explored in the plays written on the Border War, as discussed in Chapter 3, there seems to be an absence of the topic on the Facebook group’s discourse. It is very

²⁶⁰ Trans. “Die vroue is stom slagoffers wat swyg om die mans te beskerm en die patriargie op te hou, en uit misplaaste ordentlikheid.”

²⁶¹ Trans. “sy ook nie deur rooskleurige lense gesien nie”

²⁶² It is interesting that Steinmar interprets the ‘blood’ part of the title literally with its connotation to violence and not in the term’s traditional use – blood connoting bloodlines or family. This interpretation illuminates other aspects the play tries to highlight apart from family.

²⁶³ Trans. “Dit gaan, soos die titel verklap, oor grond en geweld, oor die geraamtes van die verlede en hoedat die enigste skrale hoop op ’n skerpie genesing of versoening is om die daglig op die etterende gebeentes te laat skyn.”

possible that this is because of the masculine militarised culture that exists in the Facebook group which would not necessarily welcome members of the LGBTQ+ community. In many ways, the Facebook group can be seen as an extension of the military culture that existed during the veterans' conscription years. The language, imagery and narratives propagate this. It is thus very possible, just as was the case during their conscription years, that gay veterans feel excluded and are not accepted in this space where the dominant heteronormative culture reigns supreme. This is an interesting theme in that the more modern views of the playwrights are not necessarily trickling down (or up) to the general population. The liberation narrative of the LGBTQ+ movement has not yet penetrated the veterans' discourse online, where hegemonic views about masculinity are perpetuated. This does not imply that it has not penetrated other spaces or spheres of the veterans' lives. It does, however, mean that within this hyper-masculine space of the Facebook group, veterans do feel free, safe or deem it appropriate to engage in conversations about the place and role of gay men in the Border War narrative. Especially since some of the most evident victims of crimes perpetrated by the state were against gay conscripts, it is of cardinal importance that these traumas be brought into the public discourse. The inhumane "conversion therapies" that conscripts had to undergo involuntarily to rid them of their homosexuality, is an aspect that to my mind has not received enough attention. I chose to exclude this aspect from the play as I wanted the play to reflect the mean or the "everyman" character. Although this aspect is not explored in depth in the play, the opening scene hints at the character's hostility towards this:

"Jana: Dad, uncle Johan says it's been weeks since you've gone to church.

Boet: New reverend is a faggot.

Jana: He's married to a woman dad.

Boet: Klein Tjops Ferreira too. Never stopped him."²⁶⁴

(Addendum A: 6–7)

His justification for not going to church is that the reverend is gay. "Gay" is used interchangeably with perceived femininity. The hint of the character's views on homosexuality sets up the world he exists in that is hostile towards anything that moves outside the boundaries of traditional masculinity.

²⁶⁴ Trans. "Jana: Oom Johan sê pa was weke terug in die kerk

Boet: Nuwe dominee is 'n moffie.

Jana: Hy's getroud met 'n vrou pa.

Boet: Klein Tjops Ferreira ook. Nooit hom gekeer nie."

7. Mighty Men

When it comes to themes of masculinity, one of the most interesting was the divergent discourses on the Mighty Men movement discussed in Chapter 4 and the many ways in which it represents a “rebirth” or evolution of the dominant protestant Christianity after 1994. The evangelical movement’s growth has, in many cases, revitalised the apartheid systems’ state church, the Dutch Reformed Church. A re-evaluation of the church’s role in society was necessary after 1994 as the church promoted and propagated the ideas that undergirded apartheid. The white Afrikaner has had to grapple with what religion means outside of the nationalist agenda that was promoted during apartheid. An aspect of this theme I wanted to explore in the new play was how this religious subculture provides a confessional culture. The dominant white Afrikaner’s religious conviction has until recently been almost exclusively rooted in a Calvinist tradition. This culture is not confessional and vital matters are not discussed (Van Eeden 2018, online). An evangelical movement like Mighty Men opens up possibilities of confession. The Calvinist tradition promotes ideals of propriety, which inevitably leads to a measure of repression. One of the challenges I was faced with in writing the new play had to do with how a middle-aged man from this culture of repression and silence would undergo some kind of catharsis. His circumstances imply that change would be difficult. I wanted his catharsis to be believable. In a world that is not overly psychologized, as mentioned in the section about the world of the play, a man of his profile would not read a self-help book and suddenly come to some sort of insight or healing. The believability of catharsis was cardinal. The discourses on the Mighty Men movement contained some of the only instances where I saw the veterans dealing with their culpability in upholding an unjust system.

Often veterans are converted and are established within the Angus Buchan movement. This establishment often leads to acknowledgement and confession of a past that has long been buried or ignored. I wanted to look at how this framework could serve as a catalyst for reconciliation. When an individual undergoes a spiritual enlightenment at a later stage in life, it is coupled with a myriad of complexities. How the person establishes himself/herself within their new community in their new identity, “out of character”, can lead to further rejection. This identity largely depends on the individual being forgiven for his or her transgressions.

After Boet finally attends the Mighty Men conference with some local farmers, he is confronted by his sinful past in the crusade-like setting. He returns from the conference and immediately starts confessing to Jana about the things that have been keeping him silent:

“Boet: I don’t know! There were a helluva lot of people. Men. Most of them farmers and their workers. Few guys from the towns. It was...like a church service...but different...ah goodness...I don’t always know how to say...

Boet plays with his cap. Maybe crushes it between his fists. He suppresses his tears.

I’ve realised. There are things that hold me...that hold us captive. Ah man look at me starting off with these deep stories don’t you first want some coffee...

Jana: No I want to hear! What is it dad? What’s going on?

Boet: Look I realised this weekend...there are things...things from our past that we cling to that keep us there. Things that I should say because it’s in the dark. I admitted things there in a group...things that for years...I tried so hard to expel from my mind...I have to tell you.”²⁶⁵

(Addendum A: 86–90)

I wanted to reflect something of the evolution protestant Christianity has had to undergo after apartheid and the role the evangelical movement has played in this. Boet says it is “like a church service” but not quite. He encounters the organised religion that he has grown to mistrust in a different format – farmers and their workers are now worshipping together.

I tried in the section above to show how the character struggles with the language of confession. Like many other instances in the play, the dialogue is fragmented and broken up. Boet makes excuses for his forthrightness and only proceeds to tell his daughter what happened when she reassures him she wants to hear what he has to say – she does not want coffee first! This is the first time since he has returned from the war that he is willing to open up about the truth about his past.

²⁶⁵ Trans. “Boet: Ek weet nie! Dit was as moerse klomp mense. Mans. Meeste van hulle boere en hulle volk. Paar ouens uit die dorpe. Dit was ... soos ‘n kerkdiens ... maar anders ... ek weet nie ... ag vader ... ek weet mos nie altyd hoe om hierdie goed te ...

Boet speel met sy pet. Druk dit dalk tussen sy vuiste. Hy sluk sy tranes.

Ek het besef. Daar’s goed wat my ... wat ons vashou. Ag hel ek val so weg met die diep stories ... wil jy nie eers koffie ...

Jana: Nee ek wil hoor! Wat is dit pa? Wat gaan aan?

Boet: Man ek het besef die naweek ... daar’s dinge..Goed uit ons verlede waaraan ek ... ons klou wat ons daar hou. Goed wat ek moet sê want dis in die donker. Ek het goed erken in ‘n groep daar ... goed wat ek jarre laas ... wat ek so hard probeer dryf het uit my kop ... ek moet jou vertel.”

I wanted to be careful to reflect the experience not as a “conversion” for the character but rather as an evolution of a faith that has pre-existed the Mighty Men movement. Before telling Jana about his religious experience, he firstly contextualises this:

“I’ve always been a God-fearing man. Since I was a child. He provided for me. When I prayed for rain it came. If I asked for advice he sent someone or something. I met your mother. She was my...I loved her. We could’ve worked me and her. Raising children that go to church and...”²⁶⁶

(Addendum A 87)

After talking about his faith as a young man with a promising marriage to her mother, he starts apologising for being so overly familiar about religion with his daughter. I was again careful not to make the character seem too comfortable in this “confession mode”. He is clearly from a Calvinist tradition that does not see faith as a public matter:

“Sorry I know this is odd. We don’t talk about religion or...anyway...I...I was called up after school. Me and your uncle. He left school early. Dyslexia. In those days you went to the army if you were done with school and you didn’t know what you wanted to study. The reverend...the church said we were doing it for the Lord. That we had to protect His people. Protect our land. I believed it. I prayed in every morning that the Lord would use me. Use...use me to wipe out the terrorists...I didn’t ...I didn’t realise...”²⁶⁷

(Addendum A 87)

Boet’s disillusion with the church that had supported the apartheid state is shown in the section above. After his return from the Border he decides to keep quiet about his own war crimes and his brother’s rape of local women on the Border. After confessing this to Jana he ends by talking about forgiveness, a central tenant of the faith he again professes:

²⁶⁶ Trans. “Ek was altyd ‘n God-vresende ou. Van kleintyd. Hy’t vir my gesorg. As ek gebid het vir reën het dit gekom. As ek hom gevra het om raad het hy iets of iemand gestuur. Ek het jou ma ontmoet. Sy was my...ek het haar lief gehad. Ons sou kon werk ek en sy. Kinders grootmaak wat kerk toe gaan en...”

²⁶⁷ Trans. “Skuus ek weet dis vreemd. Ons praat nie oor godsdiens of...elk geval...ek...ek’s mos na skool opgeroep. Ek en jou oom. Hy’s mos vroeg uit die skool. Disleksie en so. Daai tyd het jy maar army toe gegaan as jy klaar was met skool en jy was nie seker oor wat jy wou swot nie. Die dominee...die kerk het gesê ons doen dit vir die Here. Dat ons Sy mense beskerm. Ons land beskerm. En ek het dit geglo. Ek het soggens gebid en gevra dat die Here my sal gebruik. Gebruik...gebruik om die terts uit te roei...en het nie...ek het nie besef...”

“I’m sorry. I thought about what I wanted to tell you and I...I should’ve talked...then your mom might still be with us. Then I might not have been in the pub so much. I had to forgive him. Johan. I have to forgive him. And probably myself as well. Last night. After I talked in the group like that. After I spilled my guts and prayed: it was the first night that I didn’t hear those women scream in my sleep. That my own brother could do something so...”²⁶⁸
(Addendum A 87)

Jana responds to this by confessing that it was her uncle Johan who raped her. This was a very important aspect of the play in that I had to complicate the character’s religious experience. A confession and reconciliation on the father and daughter’s part because of his attendance of a conference does not deal sufficiently with the complexities such an experience brings along with it. He is asking for forgiveness from his daughter for his silence but also for a kind of absolution of what he has done on the Border. Jana’s revelation implies that his silence has caused his own daughter to be raped and this complicates his newfound faith. The audience is left to decide whether this faith was genuine or merely a way to absolve Boet of his sins - reconciliation without restitution or genuine repentance.

5.6 Critical Reaction to the New Play

The newly written play debuted at the Aardklop National Arts Festival in 2018. It was one of the festival’s flagship productions and was funded by AK21, a private theatre funding initiative and by National Afrikaanse Theatre Initiative. It was also performed at the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK) in 2019. Reviewer’s critical reactions to the play have been positive.²⁶⁹ Ruan Fourie (2018, online) writes in his review for the festival’s publication about the play’s relevancy:

“It is clear that the play is supported by thorough research. It leads the audience to the relevant themes but never follows the usual paths to get there. It creates awareness without preaching to the audience...”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Trans. “Ek’s jammer my kind. Ek het mooi gedink wat ek vir jou wou sê en ek...ek... moes gepraat het. Dan was jou ma dalk nog by ons. Dalk sou ek nie so...so baie in die kroeg gewees nie. Ek moes hom vergewe. Johan. Ek moet vergewe. Ek moet hom vergewe. En seker myself ook. Gisteraand. Na ek in die groep so gepraat het. Al my derms uitgeryg het en gebid het: dit was die eerste aand wat ek nie daai vroue hoor gil het in my slaap nie. Dat my eie broer so iets...”

²⁶⁹ “Bloed en Bodem” (is) ’n fantastiese teks. Dit ondersoek relevante probleme onder ’n skerp, eerlike lig.”

²⁷⁰ Trans. “Die produksie getuig van deeglike navorsing en lei die gehoor na die relevante temas, maar nooit deur die gewone pad te volg nie. Dit skep ’n bewustheid sonder om vir die kyker te preek...”

Janie Monsieur (2018, online) also writes about the original way in which the themes are engaged with in her review for *Maroela Media*:

“*Bloed en Bodem*, although dark, deep and secretive, has a brand new concept that gives life to the complex heritage of Afrikaner men after apartheid.”²⁷¹

In her review for Netwer24, Deborah Steinmar (2018, online) singles the production out as her favourite from the 2018 festival:

“As with *Melk en Vleis*, *Bloed en Bodem* was written by the visionary newcomer, Marina Albertyn, and was staged by the same team – formidable theatre-makers who have ample meat on their bones. And grit and guts. It is my undisputed winner thus far.”²⁷²

Although reviewers praised the play’s artistic merits, the majority make mention of how difficult the play is for the audience to watch. Lida Krüger (2018, online) writes:

“This is a difficult production to watch. Especially on an arts festival where one does not necessarily have the time and the opportunity to process what one has seen. Land redistribution and the uncertainty it causes, the fear of farm murders, the silence of the white men who returned from the Border, also the violence towards women are all intertwined in this play. As with her debut play, *Melk en Vleis*, Marina Albertyn does not try to simplify the facts. She also does not shy away from the atrocious realities of the themes she tackles. This makes for an excruciating yet rewarding theatre experience.”²⁷³

Ruan Botha (2018, online) echoes Krüger’s sentiments when he describes the play’s “merciless” ending:

²⁷¹ Trans. “*Bloed en Bodem*, hoewel donker, diep en geheimsinnig, het ’n splinternuwe konsep wat lewe gee aan die komplekse nalatenskap van Afrikanermans ná die afloop van apartheid.”

²⁷² Trans. “Soos *Melk en vleis* is *Bloed en bodem* deur die visioenêre nuweling Marina Albertyn geskryf en deur dieselfde span na die planke gebring – formidabele teatermakers aan wie se bene daar heelwat vleis is. En sening en harsing. Dis my onbetwiste wenner tot dusver.”

²⁷³ Trans. “Hierdie is ’n moeilike stuk om te kyk. Veral op ’n kunstefees waar ’n mens nie noodwendig die tyd en die geleentheid het om dit wat jy gesien het behoorlik te verwerk nie. Grondhervorming en die onsekerheid wat dit meebring, die vrees vir plaasmoorde, die stilswye van dié wit mans wat destyds grens toe is, asook geweld teenoor vroue word as ineengestremtel uitgebeeld in hierdie toneelstuk. Soos met haar debuutstuk, *Melk en Vleis*, probeer Marina Albertyn nie om die gegewe in haar teks te vereenvoudig nie. Sy skram ook nie weg van die afgryslieke realiteite van die temas wat sy aanpak nie. Dit sorg vir ’n uitmergelende, maar ook lonende teaterervaring.”

“It ultimately leaves the audience with an overwhelming feeling of injustice. Even through this one can see the shifting of borders, the onlooker carries this sense of unresolvedness (and the memory of the events) with them along with the abrupt ending of the production. This is purposefully so, but also mercilessly so.”²⁷⁴

Janie Monsieur’s (2018, online) review ends similarly. It acknowledges the play’s relevance and necessity but mourns the fact that it reflects reality:

“*Bloed en Bodem* is a relevant production in the political climate of South Africa in 2018. It touches on so many themes that it would resonate with most people. It is dark but important; unthinkable but the truth.”²⁷⁵

Deborah Steinmar’s (2018, online) review is entitled “You’ll have a nervous breakdown in *Bloed en Bodem*”.²⁷⁶ Her introduction reflects her emotive title:

“This reviewer has longed for Marthinus Basson’s direction – and has gotten it – and has been reduced to a “snottering” wreck. Although in this production, one sees a more sober, somewhat more realistic Basson at work. There are no grotesque buckets of blood. It is restrained, but utterly devastating. A nervous breakdown.”²⁷⁷

The extracts above sum up the general sentiment expressed in the reviews. The only point of criticism expressed in the reviews was from Prof. Lida Krüger who felt that, when the characters of Enele and Jana spoke English, that their accents were too subtle. She felt that the scene where they studied “Anthem for a Doomed Youth” by Wilfred Owen for Enele’s matric examination, portrayed the characters as too comfortable with the complexities of the poem. She writes:

²⁷⁴ Trans. “...(dit laat) die kyker uiteindelik met ’n geweldige sin van afwesige geregtigheid. Selfs hierdeur kan ’n mens egter die verskuiwing van grense waarneem; die kyker dra uiteraard die sin van onopgelostheid (en die herinnering aan die gebeure) verder met hul saam as net die abrupte slot van die produksie. Bedoeld so, maar tog ook ongenadig so.”

²⁷⁵ Trans. “*Bloed en Bodem* is ’n relevante produksie in die politieke klimaat van Suid-Afrika in 2018. Dit raak soveel temas aan dat die meeste mense sal kan aanklank vind daarby. Dit is donker, maar belangrik; ondenkbaar, maar die waarheid.”

²⁷⁶ Trans. “Jou senuwees stort ineen in *Bloed en Bodem*”

²⁷⁷ Trans. “Hierdie resensent het verlang na Marthinus Basson se regie – en dit gekry – en is op die plek gereduseer tot ’n “snotterende” wrak. In hierdie produksie is daar weliswaar ’n besadigde, ietwat meer realistiese Basson aan die woeker. Daar is geen sprake van groteske emmers vol bloed nie. Dis ingehoue, maar algeheel verpletterend. ’n Senu-ineenstorting.”

“As a lecturer in English I just want to say that this is not how struggling students work; this is how students that get 70s and 80s work.”²⁷⁸

Enele ultimately gets an A, but I feel her comment is justified as the characters seem overly comfortable with the poetry. This was ironed out at the KKNK performance and was changed before the play was published. She does put this comment into context, however:

“Despite this small, unrealistic detail, *Bloed en Bodem* is a fantastic text. It explores relevant problems in sharp, honest light.”²⁷⁹

Bloed en Bodem was nominated in three categories at the Aardklop Festival including the “Best production” category. Albert Pretorius won the award for best actor for his portrayal of the character of Boet.

5.6 Personal reflections on the production at the Aardklop Festival

The emotional reaction Steinmar voices above was also evident in the audience’s reaction. Many audience members remained seated in silence after the production or in tears. Although these reactions cannot be used as a tool to measure whether the play has succeeded in engaging with the relevant themes, the fact that both the play’s complexity and its emotional impact was highlighted by the reviewers, is significant. I wanted the play to remain critical and to display the complexities as opposed to providing answers. This would mean that one could be in danger of making a very clinical “academic” play that functions more as a thesis in itself that cannot stand on its own as a human story that provides some form of connection or reflection of the real. Going in the opposite direction by telling the story without minding the research, or by voicing controversial (prejudicial) voices without critical counter-voices would have been just as harmful. Although the sentiment might have appealed to the audience members, I think reviewers might have been more critical of this.

5.7 Conclusion

²⁷⁸ Trans. “As ’n dosent in Engels wil ek hier noem dat dit nie is hoe studente wat sukkel te werk gaan nie; dit is hoe studente wat in die 70s en 80s kry te werk gaan.”

²⁷⁹ Trans. “Ten spyte van hierdie klein, onrealistiese detail, is “Bloed en Bodem” ’n fantastiese teks. Dit ondersoek relevante probleme onder ’n skerp, eerlike lig.”

I have tried to show in this chapter how and where the themes in the Border War plays intersect with – and diverge from – those from my research of the Border War veteran’s online discourses. I then illustrated by employing examples from the newly written text how these themes were incorporated or subverted to hopefully create a text that avoids the trap of “restorative nostalgia” (Krüger 2013: 439). The fact that the play’s critical reception has been positive and that audiences seemed to connect with the material hopefully means that the new production has added something to the on-going process of meaning-making in the aftermath of the Border War. The fact that the play is seen as critical, and not sentimental or nostalgic, means that this production was written and directed in a way that contributes responsibly without forcing the audience to adopt a prescribed view of the events that took place.

This chapter has hopefully illustrated how the research undertaken in the first four chapters has been reflected in *Bloed en Bodem*. I find it particularly exciting that this research could reach such a wide audience. The analysis of online discourse on the Border War and the findings of its correlation to research done on PTSD has been presented in the play. Had this been limited to a traditional thesis, I highly doubt if so many people would have been able to interact with aspects of the research. The fact that the play could be performed professionally at two arts festivals meant that the research I had undertaken, could move out of the confines of Academia and into the open theatrical domain. This aspect will be elaborated more in the final chapter in which I will try to make suggestions for further enquiries and to reflect on the process of creating and staging the play.

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ENQUIRY

6.1 Introduction

Due to the cyclic nature of the study, conclusions were drawn at the end of every chapter. I will not repeat these findings in full but will briefly summarise the previous chapters before outlining the structure of this final chapter.

In the first chapter, I gave an outline of the dynamics surrounding the staging of an event as complex as the Border War. This chapter also used the Iterative cyclic web model (Smith & Dean 2009: 19) to give an outline of the study with arts-based research as its frame of enquiry.

Chapter 2 was a theoretical chapter in which I gave an overview of a variety of intersecting fields of study. I firstly looked at trauma and trauma studies and how this has branched into newer fields such as transgenerational trauma, collective trauma and PTSD. This led to the theorisation of performing memory, postcolonial theatre, nostalgia and history. I then looked at the implications this held in the historical context of the Border War. This chapter was part of the academic research part of the iterative cycle in which one interprets and synthesizes ideas.

The third chapter was a continuation of the academic research part of the cycle and also included the interpretation of ideas. In this chapter, I attempted to orientate myself within the lineage of practice. This led to an output of common themes observed after a close reading of plays written about the Border War. I identified and discussed these using extracts from Border War plays.

In Chapter 4, I showed the output gathered from my observation of a Facebook group for Border War veterans. From my observations of the group's discourses, I grouped together discourses that illustrated common themes discussed in the group. I also analysed the texts used to illustrate the themes observed.

Chapter 5 was an illustration of how the research done in chapters 2, 3 and 4 had culminated in the creation of *Bloed en Bodem*. I tried to show how the identification and comparison of themes found

online and in existing Border War plays led to me to write a new play. I did a selective exegesis of the parts of the play that best illustrated the intersection of these themes. I then discussed how critics responded to the play at the Aardklop Festival and at the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival.

In this final chapter, I will incorporate the feedback received from critics with my own reflections on the newly written play to evaluate how successful the play has been in grappling with the research inquiry in this chapter. This is also part of the “theorising of ideas” phase in the Iterative cyclic web (Smith & Dean 2009: 19). This will include a return to the “academic research” part of the web as I will use an arts-based research framework to evaluate the play thus returning to the phase in which one can “Test the theory empirically or refine the theory/ideas through comparison and argument” (Ibid.). I will conclude this chapter with ideas for further inquiries, thus returning to the “idea generation” phase of the Iterative cyclic web (Ibid.) having come full circle.

6.2 A Self-assessment

In their seminal work on the discipline, *Arts Based Research*, Barone and Eisner (2011: 145) argue the following about the assessment of the value of arts-based research:

“...a good piece of arts based research succeeds in enticing a reader or viewer into taking another look at dimensions of the social world that had come to be taken for granted.”

They further state that ultimately, this may “lead a community of viewers... into a conversation about the utility of alternative ways of interpreting and understanding social events and issues” (Barone & Eisner 2011: 145). Their criteria for further assessment includes the following aspects:

a) Incisiveness:

“research that gets to the heart of a social issue.” (Barone and Eisner 2011: 148)

b) Concision:

“the degree to which it occupies the minimal amount of space or includes the least amount of verbiage necessary for it to serve its primary, heuristic purpose of enabling members of an audience to see social phenomena from a fresh perspective...a really good arts based research text may therefore be characterized as lean, insofar as every single word contributes to the whole of the text.” (Barone & Eisner 2011: 149–150)

c) Coherence:

“By coherence, we mean a work of arts based research whose features hang together as a strong form.” (Ibid.: 150–151)

d) Generativity:

“the ways in which the work enables one to see or act upon phenomena even though it represents a kind of case study” (Ibid.: 152)

e) Social Significance:

“pertains to the character, meaning, and import of the central ideas of the work. ” (Ibid.: 153)

f) Evocation and Illumination:

“its evocative and illuminative qualities” (Ibid.)

I will attempt to use the above criteria to reflect on the merit of the newly written play.

Barone and Eisner’s (2011: 148) first criterion is “incisiveness” or “research that gets to the heart of a social issue”. They expand on this notion by describing incisiveness as “penetrating” and “sharp in the manner in which it cuts to the core of an issue” (Ibid.). I think the newly written play, *Bloed en Bodem*, can be described as incisive as it cuts to the core of the issues with metaphor and opposing views. In terms of its concision and coherence, the fact that so many diverse themes seem to work together to engage in a meaning-making process of the Border War in contemporary South Africa testifies to its success in this regard. Fourie (2018, online), as quoted in the previous chapter, notes that the play reflects thorough research and does not follow ordinary pathways to get to the relevant themes. Barone and Eisner (2011: 150) also describe concision as a “kind of intelligent discrimination based on a sense of what sorts of questions the researcher would raise in the minds of the audience about the social phenomena being researched”. Fourie (2018, online) writes the following about the questions the play raises:

“*Bloed en Bodem* highlights extremely important and current themes...and the production especially raises questions around morality within certain challenging contexts.”

This feedback is also valuable in assessing the play's merit with regard to the criteria set out above as “meaning-making”, and moral questions stand central to the purpose of the play and correlate with the research aims set out in Chapter 1. In assessing the play's concision and subsequent cohesion regarding how eloquently these questions are posed, the play seems to hold its own. Pople's (2019, online) review in *Die Volksblad* speaks directly to the aspects of concision and incisiveness. She firstly lists all the themes the play touches on:

“*Bloed en Bodem*'s themes are around land ownership in South Africa, the commercialization of farms that increasingly have to be run like businesses, faith making references to the Mighty Men movement, masculinity and the treatment of women by men, and post-traumatic stress.”²⁸⁰

She then goes on to say all that these themes are interwoven dexterously without “airbrushing” the complexities in just under 90 minutes, due to the streamlined nature of the text and the precise direction (Pople 2019, online).

In their discussion of the criterion labelled “generativity”, Barone and Eisner (2011: 152) quote Aristotle who wrote that “poetry is truer than history because poetry deals with the world in its most general sense while history focuses on particulars”. I feel in this sense the newly written play manages to convey generalised “truths” through particulars, but without making generalisations²⁸¹. The fact that the play was written from these truths and has come to be represented through specific characters speaks of this criterion as an inherent trait of the play.

In many ways, the last two criteria, “social significance” and “evocation and illumination”, can be judged together. Here, Barone and Eisner (Ibid.) write that they look firstly for something that matters, secondly for ideas that count, and thirdly for important questions to be raised in their critique of arts-based research. This has been touched on in discussing the other criteria – all the reviewers highlighted the fact that the play engages with timely themes and important questions. The fact that the last criterion, “evocation and illumination”, speaks of illumination is somewhat more challenging. To my mind, this evokes something of innovation and “newness”, or at least a new way of looking at known themes. As previously quoted, Janie Monsieur (2018, online) writes

²⁸⁰ Trans. “Bloed en Bodem se temas wentel om grondbesit tans in Suid-Afrika, die kommersialisering van boerderye wat al hoe meer as sakeondernemings bestuur moet word, geloof met verwysing na die Mighty Men-beweging, manlikheid en die hantering van vroue deur mans, en post-traumatiese stress.”

²⁸¹ See Barone and Eisner (2011: 152) for an in depth analysis of the difference between generalisations and generativity- i.e. $n=x$ versus $n=I$.

that “*Bloed en Bodem*, although dark, deep and secretive, has a brand new concept that gives life to the complex heritage of Afrikaner men after apartheid”.²⁸² The function of the play is described by Steinmar (2018, online), previously quoted, as shining a light on social issues so that this may bring healing. The binary of illumination is darkness which signifies untruths or lies. The previous white nationalist government will be remembered for the lies they perpetuated around racial purity in their quest for segregation. This society was one that was heavily controlled and engineered by the state. After 1994, South Africans have had to engage in a meaning-making process to find a new national identity, hopefully, built on truths. Although the TRC started this process directly after this new democracy started, its outcomes have not always been satisfactory in terms of transitional justice and in ensuring meaningful restitution. One of the reasons for this, which I discussed in Chapter 1, was that the TRC focused on giving an account of what happened and not necessarily on speaking to where accountability lies for rebuilding a nation. The focus was thus on the events and not on the meaning of the events or its aftermath. With *Bloed en Bodem*, I tried to shine a light on these issues rather concretely by making issues of land ownership central to the plot. In this way, I feel the play illuminates an aspect of the Border War’s significance in contemporary times: whose land were these men fighting for? If this land does not belong to them: where are their homes? These are universal questions to be grappled with which are not unique to the South African context. However, I do not think illumination implies that the artist is doing something completely new. Illumination implies that the artist has found a new angle to engage with an old problem. By using contemporary themes to explore the meaning of the Border War retrospectively, the complexities of the past may be highlighted. It is my sincere hope that the play has managed to shine a light on previously buried hurts and shame to bring us closer to understanding, restitution and reconciliation.

6.3 A Reflective Conclusion

In the first chapter I framed the research enquiry as follows:

How can one utilise the current social media discourses on the Border War to generate thematic material for the creation of a new play that deals with trauma of the war and its role in the formation of white South African identity, without falling into the trap of “restorative nostalgia” (Krüger 2013: 439)?

²⁸² Trans. “*Bloed en Bodem*, hoewel donker, diep en geheimsinnig, het ’n splinternuwe konsep wat lewe gee aan die komplekse nalatenskap van Afrikanermans ná die afloop van apartheid.”

I attempted to explore this question by first defining the concepts involved in any study of trauma and war in Chapters 2 and 3. I then looked at the themes that had already been explored in other plays on the Border War in Chapter 3. The themes identified in the plays written on the Border War were:

- PTSD
- Fathers & sons
- Blame for an older generation of generals
- Forgotten, Angry and Confused (FACE)
- The Female perspective
- Homosexuality.

Following this, I identified common themes found in online discourses of Border War veterans. These themes were:

- PTSD
- Questioning fathers
- When things were better
- Remembrance
- A call to arms
- Mighty Men

I then wrote a play, *Bloed en Bodem*, that reflected these themes. I wanted to find out where these themes overlapped and where they diverged. I wanted to highlight some of the under-explored themes and to examine others critically. The aspect I focused on most, was that of the second generation – Boetman's children and the issue of PTSD. This process was described in Chapter 5. In the previous chapter, I also discussed how *Bloed en Bodem* was received by critics. I concluded that, from the feedback received, the play had avoided the trap of restorative nostalgia by confronting the role conscripts played in the injustices of the past and by tackling the remnants of the prejudices of apartheid in the present.

Although I would reject the notion that anything can be proven without a doubt when doing arts-based research, I do think some questions may lead to more interesting questions or binaries.

Barone and Eisner (2011) say that “the purpose of arts based research is to raise significant questions and engender conversations rather than the proffer final meanings”. The reviews discussed in Chapter 5 that analysed the newly written play, commented on the play’s complexity and its refusal to give easy answers or to provide the audience with simple resolutions (Fourie 2018, online).

I feel that a simple answer to the question posed in my research question could be summed up in one word: “complexity”. I found that one could most meaningfully contribute to the meaning-making process of remembering the Border War by voicing opposing views. In reading Fourie’s *Boetman is die Bliksem in!* (2017), I was especially struck by effectivity of using binary voices on stage to critically question the past.²⁸³ This meant making the Border War veterans less prominent than one would expect. I did this by making the characters of Enele (a young black man) and Jana (a young white woman) – the binary opposites of the middle-aged white Afrikaner male – reflect their many hypocrisies and blind spots. I found that by having a plurality of opposing voices, it is possible to create a more nuanced representation of the past. When I started out in the process I did not expect the female character and the black character in *Bloed en Bodem* to have such a central role in the play. I found that these binary characters – of gender and race – held within them the possibility of contradicting the veterans’ nostalgic version of the past in which they were simple victims who did not know what they were doing. The supporting characters also provided a valuable juxtaposition against which to “measure” these men. The fact that Enele is full of vitality and dreams for the future is in stark contrast with the emotionally disturbed Boet. The characters of Jana and Enele also reflect the characters’ own binaries. Jana is shown to be ruthlessly pragmatic in her attempt to hold on to the land her family owns. Her unsympathetic, borderline-racist views add complexity to her character to portray her not merely as a woman, but also to highlight her identity as a white woman²⁸⁴. In turn, Enele ultimately feels protective over Jana after she is raped. As a black man, he is blamed unfairly for her violation. The veterans’ supporting characters as binaries provide multiple opportunities for a more nuanced representation of a contemporary South Africa in which characters exist within multiple identities and have to co-exist with multiple binaries of these identities. What this ultimately does, is to highlight the precariousness of the racial constructs that apartheid cemented in South African society. By showing the complexities and multiple identities that exist within individuals – the hegemonic views of apartheid which categorized individuals simply as black or white, male or female, is destabilised.

²⁸³ See the section: “the Female perspective” in Chapter 4.

²⁸⁴ Intersectionality could be used as a paradigm to expand this analysis but a detailed study of these identities fall outside the scope of this study.

The other important aspect I felt was needed, was to stage a true everyman: one whom the audience believes to be inherently good but who stayed silent when he should have talked.²⁸⁵ One of the core aspects of perpetrator trauma is that of guilt. In the case of the SADF's conscripts, this guilt is often not because of direct acts of violence but because of passivity. The old, yet wonderful, cliché that evil is perpetrated when good men do nothing is of particular relevance here. The passivity of a generation of men who did very little to avoid conscription²⁸⁶ is one that has to be dealt with in the aftermath of apartheid. I wanted the central character not to be a parody of a white Afrikaner racist, but rather to show a man influenced by his circumstances to conceal and stay silent about the evils he had committed and had seen his brother commit. I purposely made his main crime that of passivity. His refusal to acknowledge the crimes of his brother – and ultimately, his people – causes his own daughter to suffer the same horrors he refused to confess. I wanted the character of Boet not to represent an extreme, but rather a mean. I wanted Boet to be an authentic character whose decisions, whilst not condoned, are believable. This is by no means a call to whitewash the past, but a hope that future representations would reflect contemporary realities.

Racism is still rife in South Africa and many right-wing communities exist that are thriving online. It would seem that with all the focus on micro-aggressions the very serious “macro” events are forgotten or pushed aside. Even though there are some who believe such characters should not be given a platform even in a fictional form, unless the reality of their cruelty is laid bare, there can be no justice or future reconciliation. Staging these characters has to be done in a way that subverts their racist views, or in a manner that highlights the hypocrisy and downright absurdity of their prejudices. By placing them against an opposing voice or view, this can be highlighted in a meaningful way. In denying the existence of these communities, either through caricature or by ignoring their existence, there can be no engagement with what should be done to re-integrate or rehabilitate these men in the new South Africa. In many ways the narrative of the Border War veteran does not fit neatly with the liberation narrative of contemporary South Africa. This leaves

²⁸⁵ See the section on the Mighty Men movement in Chapter 5 and how the confessional was dealt with in the play.

²⁸⁶ I discussed resistance to the SADF in chapter 3 and found that conscripts very rarely “defied the system and joined oppositional organisations such as the End Conscription Campaign (ECC)” (Baines 2008:219). In rare instances, “national servicemen even went into exile to join the ranks of the armed wings of the African National Congress (ANC) or Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)” (Baines 2008:219). However, these practices were the exception to the rule:

“By and large, South Africa’s citizen soldiers believed the dominant ideology that held that “terrorists” aided and abetted by communists were threatening to destroy white society in the country.” (Baines 2008:219)

a void that can easily be filled by nationalist agendas or by opportunists who arouse cheap emotions in audience members hungry for a sense of belonging.

In thinking about the issue of representing a character authentically, I also considered the audience's identification with these characters. One of the moments during this process that led to the most serious introspection, was during a public talk after the performance of *Bloed en Bodem* at the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival: There is usually a discussion for festival-goers where the theatre-makers speak about the performance they have just watched. This discussion was led by political journalist Jan-Jan Joubert. After directing some questions to the cast, myself and the director, the audience was allowed to ask questions or make comments about the production. I found this exchange difficult, yet moving as many members of the audience spoke about family members – ex-national servicemen – who had committed suicide or were dealing with extreme symptoms of PTSD. There was evidently a need for audience members to talk about the effects of the war. One lady told about how she worked in parliament on the day the opposition leader, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, resigned as he did not want to be a part of a system that would send his son to fight an unjust war. I found these audience members to be eager not only to engage with their own suffering, but surprisingly, also to talk about their guilt. One audience member highlighted the members of SWAPO and MK soldiers who were also dealing with PTSD. There was an audience member however, a lady, whose exchange I found the most difficult to process. She asked us what we thought might have happened after Jana confessed that her uncle was the one who had raped her.²⁸⁷ Albert Pretorius, the actor portraying Boet, said that the cast and director had made a decision themselves about what they thought happened, but that he did not want to say, as to do so would be to miss the point of the play: it would take away any ambiguity. Stian Bam, who portrayed Johan, asked the lady what she thought he would have done. She said she thought Johan would probably have given his brother a few hard blows²⁸⁸ and then would have prayed with him. The audience, myself included, laughed at this light moment after the heaviness that had preceded this discussion. In the weeks that followed, I continued to meditate on this incident and was troubled by what it signified. I had tried to transpose religion in the play in a way that would make sense in a contemporary scenario as this reflected a central aspect of the discourses I observed online. The forgiveness and grace this lady expected the character to show his brother was deeply problematic in that it ignores the plight of the victim – in this case Jana and

²⁸⁷ Unfortunately I did not make a recording of this session and no transcript exists that I can cross-check. I am thus paraphrasing and giving a personal, subjective account of what was said.

²⁸⁸ She used the lovely Afrikaans word “opstoppers” to describe these blows.

indirectly, Enele. Her “forgive and forget” fantasy covered by a blanket of religion is in many ways a repetition of the TRC’s process which fails to question and hold to account perpetrators – some of whom did not even show remorse. I am not saying religion is solely to blame in this scenario. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s²⁸⁹ seminal theological work on faith and forgiveness, *The Cost of Discipleship* (2012), makes a distinction between cheap grace and costly grace. He writes that cheap grace is to forgive sins without any consequences to the perpetrator. The church is seen as an endless treasury of grace that requires no costly change on the perpetrators’ part (Bonhoeffer 2012: 43). The expectation that Boetman immediately forgives and prays with his brother and does not call the police first, is an example of this cheap grace that does not deal with the heart of evil. I do not know if this is possibly the other side to making such research public as one cannot control reactions to a complex narrative in which individuals invariably latch on to what they see as the truth. A plurality of voices thus brings along its own complexities when this intersects with an audience’s worldview(s). It is possible that the binary voices in my research need to be louder to provide a stronger counter-balance. However, I would then possibly be in danger of losing an authentic portrayal, as discussed above. Hopefully, just as I have been thinking about this lady’s answer and how this will inform my future practice, she might also have thought about her answer and how there might be other ways the play might that would not ignore the perpetrator’s victims.

In reflecting on the research question, another aspect that has helped to avoid the trap of “restorative trauma” (Krüger 2013: 439; Boym 2001) was a practical, almost structural one that had to do with distance. By taking the narrative away from the physical Border War, and by making the war the backdrop of the action on stage, the opportunity arises for the audience to move away from merely analysing the traumatic event to rather analysing its aftermath. This hopefully begins the process of critical meaning-making and a reflection on the complexities of white Afrikaner identity and their relationship with guilt as an antidote to the oversimplification which restorative nostalgia implies. This was also a way to reflect the research done in Chapter 2, which indicated that veterans were more likely to deal with the implications of their traumatic experiences in midlife as opposed to directly after their conscription. Connell et al. (2013: 4) confirmed an increase in traumatic symptoms as the men got older; it did, in fact, come “years later” (Callister 2007: 116–7). By showing veterans as middle-aged men with children of their own, the audience

²⁸⁹ Bonhoeffer was a German minister who actively opposed Nazi ideologies before and during the Second World War. Although he had the chance to escape Germany where his life was under threat, he chose to stay in Germany and to speak out against the horrors of the Third Reich as he felt this was in direct opposition to his Christian faith. This extended to a plot in which he attempted to assassinate Hitler for which he was ultimately executed.

is able to see the war not only as an event in the past but as something which continues to influence individual perspectives and experiences in contemporary South Africa.

Another aspect to this structural distance is the use of another event as metaphor. The fact that Boet's daughter is raped by his own brother, of course, hints at the betrayal Border War veterans feel at the hand of "their own". By playing with the audience's expectations of what the perpetrator's identity is and by subverting their expectations about who the actual "enemy" is, previously unquestioned notions are destabilised and a space is created where one can engage in a meaning-making process without losing critical awareness. I found that by removing the veterans from the war and into a space they would occupy in present-day South Africa, there was more freedom to explore the meaning of the Border War through their surroundings and through the aftermath of the war. Using the rape as a metaphor is, in many ways, the result of being able to distance the veterans from the physical Border space. Their children have now become the battlefield. I wanted to see where the war "remains" and found the second generation looking for answers online. The rape not only signifies the children's suffering because of their fathers' silence, but also signifies how conscripts felt betrayed by "their own". I wanted to show through a simple tale of brothers – a kind of Cain and Abel archetype – how one's own is not necessarily who one thinks they are. I wanted to ultimately question who the true enemy was. This aspect is obviously retrospective: that the white nationalist government was an oppressive regime, is universally acknowledged. In the immediate aftermath of apartheid, however, it seems that many white South Africans not only had to deal with the fact that they had in some way participated in upholding this unjust system, but white men also had to deal with the fact that they had sacrificed their innocence in battle for a war that was fought on dubious grounds²⁹⁰. The process of meaning-making was put into motion whereby ex-conscripts had to confront what these events meant in the context of a free and democratic South Africa. In staging a narrative that attempts to engage with this meaning-making process, I was thus more interested in the disillusionment that followed the war. By focusing singularly on the traumatic event – i.e. war – I would have fallen into the trap of simply representing the temporal event. Trauma exists in multiple temporalities however and in showing its manifestation in the present, as opposed to its recreation, the complexities of trauma is represented on stage. Put simply, I did not want to recreate the traumatic event as this is not central to the meaning-making process. I wanted to examine its implications in the present. In doing so, I transferred the veterans to another space where they are not on the Border anymore, but where I can show how the Border's after-effects have followed them home.

²⁹⁰ Chapter 3 describes these grounds with more nuance.

The review that meant the most in terms of measuring the relevance of the play and the extent to which it has managed to avoid the traps of nostalgia, is the one written by Prof. Lida Krüger (2018). The initial research question was formulated using her article written for *Litnet Akademies* (2013) about “restorative trauma”. I had not invited Prof. Krüger to watch the play and I was wonderfully surprised to see that, not only had she attended one of the performances, but that she had written an extensive review of the play on her theatre blog (Krüger 2018, online). Krüger (2013: 420) was very critical about Opperman’s *Tree Aan!* (2011) and alleges that the play “mimetically presents the audience with a simple sequence of events” without investigating collective guilt and the blurred “lines between truth and perception, victim and perpetrator”. In contrast to this, she writes (as previously pointed out) in her review of *Bloed en Bodem* (2018) that the newly written play refuses to simplify the complexity of the themes the play engages with:

“As with her debut play, *Melk en Vleis*, Marina Albertyn does not try to simplify the events in her text. She also does not shy away from the grim realities of the themes she tackles. This results in a gruelling, yet rewarding theatre experience.”²⁹¹
(Krüger 2018, online)

The fact that the academic who in many ways planted the seed that would result in my research, and ultimately in a newly written play, was able to comment on the play’s complexity is a wonderful “full circle” experience for me as a researcher-playwr.

ight. Her original academic article about the danger of restorative nostalgia in the Border War plays, had as its core critique the refusal in *Tree Aan!* to acknowledge the complexities surrounding the war’s aftermath:

“Through the mimetic nature of this drama as well as the larger context, the individual audience member is pressured to support the ideology promoted in this drama. In the current discursive climate, where issues surrounding the Border War are still unresolved and appear to be highly complex, this is unacceptable.”
(Krüger 2013: 421)

²⁹¹ Trans. “Soos met haar debuutstuk, *Melk en Vleis*, probeer Marina Albertyn nie om die gegewe in haar teks te vereenvoudig nie. Sy skram ook nie weg van die afgryslike realiteite van die temas wat sy aanpak nie. Dit sorg vir ‘n uitmergelende, maar ook lonende teaterervaring.”

Krüger 's (2018, online) acknowledgement of the newly written play as a “difficult” and “complex” yet “rewarding” and “fantastic” text, means that the newly written text has managed to engage in a meaningful way with the original research inquiry. As arts-based research does not see its aims as finding proofs but rather as engaging in new and complex ways, this goes a long way towards answering – or providing more interesting questions in reply to – the original research enquiry.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Inquiry

The research I have conducted has drawn on many fields and paradigms. Consequently, I have seen opportunities for research in various fields, some outside my own field of inquiry. Studies on PTSD in clinical psychology and psychiatry in the South African context provide many opportunities for further enquiry. The study by Connell et al. (2013: 4) on Border War Veterans is the first and only study that looks at the impact of PTSD on Border War veterans. Although Sasha Gear (2002) wrote a significant research report as part of the *Violence and Transition Series*, this shows very little quantitative data about the numbers of veterans struggling with PTSD. This is an underexplored area in the South African psychiatric and psychological field. Connell et al.'s study also only included a sample of veterans who fought on the SADF's side (2013: 4). It is essential that these studies should be expanded to include SWAPO veterans as well.

My research, that focused on themes found in Border War dramas, indicates that the production history of these dramas provide ample opportunities for further research. Although Chapter 3 gives an overview of these plays, this is done as a contextual study of the lineage of practice and does not give a complete historical account of these plays (or their performances) as that fell outside the scope of this study. A theatre history scholar can take this further to engage with what the term “Border drama” means and to wrestle with the complexities of canonization. Plays such as Akerman's *Somewhere on the Border* (2001) have fascinating production histories²⁹² that intersect with the politics of apartheid South Africa.

²⁹² See Chapter 3 for details on this. The production team had as a member a spy for the South African government and rehearsed in Amsterdam as members of the cast were part of the ECC.

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ADDENDUM A: *BLOED EN BODEM*

Bloed en bodem was first performed at the Aardklop festival in October 2018. This was made possible by AK21. The cast was as follows:

BOET: Albert Pretorius

JANA: Carla Smith

JOHAN: Stian Bam

ENELE: Obed de Koker

DIRECTOR: Marthinus Basson

PRODUCTION: Chris Pienaar & Danielle Louw

KARAKTERS:

JANA: Een-en-twintig. 'n Landboustudent aan Kopsies. Sy moes vinnig grootword.

BOET: Vyf-en-vyftig. Jana se pa. 'n Skaapboer. 'n Grensoorlog-veteraan en oudhoofseun van die dorp. 'n Verslae alkoholis.

JOHAN: Vier-en-vyftig. Boet se broer en medeboer. 'n Sjarmente man.

ENELE: Vyf-en-twintig. 'n Plaaswerker se seun wat saam met Jana grootgeword het. Hy is 'n goeie rugbyspeler met baie ambisie. 'n Baie slim man.

STEL:

Die hele drama speel af in een vertrek, die sitkamer/voorvertrek van 'n tipiese Afrikaanse plaashuis met ingeleefde meubels (bv. bal-en-klou-sitbank, dierveltapyte, geraamde familiefoto's, kapstok). Daar is 'n traliehek/diefwering soos 'n "treldoor". Die alomteenwoordige vrees vir 'n plaasaanval moet tasbaar wees. Daar is ook 'n rak/khuis sigbaar waarin wapens gestoor word. Die beligting is gedemp en aards en vestig saam met plaasgeluide soos 'n bakkie op die grondpad, lammers wat blêr en krieke in die nag 'n plaasomgewing.

1

JANA kom in by die deur. Sy het 'n sleutel in haar hand en dra 'n groot tas. Sy trek die groot veiligheidshek toe. Sy het pas tuisgekom van die universiteit af. Die huis is donker.

JANA

Hallo? Halloooo? Pa?

Jana trek die gordyne oop. Sy merk die leë bierbottels en begin dit optel. Sy gaan sit en kom dan agter sy sit op een van haar pa se vuil hemde. Sy ruik hieraan en trek haar gesig. Sy kyk na haar horlosie. Ná 'n ruk tel sy die Landbouweekblad op. Boet kom in vanuit die kamer. Hy het pas opgestaan en lyk verslons. Dit is al vroegmiddag.

BOET

Heit! Wat maak jy hier?

Jana staan op om haar pa te groet. Sy soen hom op die mond.

JANA

Ek het besluit om huis toe te kom. Ek wou Pa vooraf sê, maar ek het geweet Pa sou weier.

BOET

Hoe bedoel jy huis toe kom? Wat van jou swottings?

JANA

Ons kan later daaroor praat. Het Pa al geeë?

BOET

Wat gaan aan? Het jy gedop?

JANA

Dis die middel van die semester, Pa, mens pluk eers na 'n eksamen.

BOET

Nou wat maak jy hier.

JANA

Ek het vir Pa kom kuier.

BOET

Vir wat? Swot jy nie?

JANA

Sjoe.

BOET

Jy weet goed wat ek bedoel. Jy moet mos studeer.

JANA

Oom Johan het my gebel. Hy's bekommerd.

BOET

Waaroor?

JANA

Kan ons nie eers eet nie, Pa? Ek kan vir ons braai.

BOET

Ek vra jou 'n vraag, meisiekind!

JANA

Het Pa al middagete gehad?

BOET

Waaroor het Johan jou gebel?

JANA

Hy't gesê hy's bekommerd ...

Stilte.

Oor pa.

BOET

Vir wat nogal?

JANA

Pa, ek ... moet nou nie ...

Stilte.

Ek het vyf bottels opgetel.

BOET

Martha is siek. Sy gaan môre kom skoonmaak.

JANA

Dis nie die punt nie, Pa. Vyf biere is nie ...

BOET

Dit het niks met jou uit te waai of ek 'n dop geniet op sy tyd ...

JANA

Natuurlik het dit! Ek gee tog om oor Pa. Oor wat op die plaas aangaan.

Sy kyk na haar horlosie.

JANA

Dis al ná twaalf en Pa loop nog rond in Pa se nagklere. Die plaas het seker al ...

BOET

Wat weet jy van hoe ek my plaas bestuur? Jy's mos nie aldag hier om te sien wat ek doen nie. Dit het niks met jou uit te waai ...

JANA

Hemel Pa, natuurlik het dit! Ek kan nie hier wees nie, ek swot. Ek kom boer sodra ek klaar is. My hande is skurf gewerk plaasvakansies.

Stilte.

Ek het juis gekom om te help, want ek wil nie hê die dinge moet agterraak nie.

BOET

Agter aak? Wat probeer jy sê? Dat ek nie kan boer nie? My broer het jou nou weer aangesteek. Julle twee is kop in een mus.

JANA

Niemand het dit gesê nie, Pa. Hy's net besorgd. Oom Retief sê hy't Pa biduur toe genooi, maar Pa daag nie op nie.

BOET

Waar staat praat jy met Retief Meyer?

JANA

Ek het hom nou net by die Koöperasie raakgeloop toe ek diesel ingegooi het.

BOET

Klomp stywe drolle daai. Retief en sy maters. Hou hul hoogheilig. Drink nie eers meer saam 'n dop ...

JANA

Oom Johan sê Pa was weke gelede in die kerk.

BOET

Die nuwe dominee is 'n moffie.

JANA

Hy's getroud met 'n vrou, Pa.

BOET

Klein Tjops Ferreira ook. Nóóit hom gekeer nie.

JANA

Hy sê Pa kry weer nagmerries.

BOET

Jir, daai man. Kan hom mos nie uit 'n ander man se saak hou nie.

JANA

Hy's jou broer.

BOET

Wie's jou "jou"?

JANA

Jammer. Pa se broer. Wanneer laas het Pa gestort?

BOET

Sê jy ek stink?

Jana is stil.

BOET

Ek het heeldag geploeg. Dis mos maar hoe 'n man ruik na 'n dag op die plaas.

Jana is steeds stil.

Ag fok, my kind. Wat wil jy hê?

JANA

Ek wil Pa help.

Boet lag sarkasties.

BOET

Met wát nogal?

JANA

Met die plaas. Ek's bekommerd oor vanjaar se veiling. Oom Johan sê hy weet nie of Pa

BOET

En nou moet my meisiekind my kom red.

JANA

Wel, ek weet nie of Pa dalk 'n seun het waarvan ek nie weet nie.

BOET

Doen jy wat jy wil. Ek kan julle vroumense nie keer as jul iets in jul koppe gekry het nie.

Hy begin sy naels met sy knipmes skoonmaak.

JANA

Gaan Pa koffie drink?

BOET

Ja. Sit maar die ketel aan.

Jana loop uit kombuis toe. Boet bly sit. Daar is 'n klop aan die deur. Enele verskyn.

ENELE

Môre, Meneer.

BOET

Dagsê.

ENELE

Ek hoor Jana is hier, Meneer. Ek het gou kom groet.

BOET

Sy's in die kombuis ...

Jana kom in soos hy beduie.

JANA

Wat hoor ek? Enele!

Sy omhels hom.

Wat maak jy hier? So lekker om jou te sien! Moet jy nie in Potch wees nie?

BOET

Hy's terug. Die man maak nou reg om te swot.

JANA

Wat? Speel jy nie meer rugby nie?

ENELE

Nee. My enkel begin lol.

JANA

Die selle besering van skool?

ENELE

Einste.

JANA

Jis, ek's jammer, man. Ek weet jy wou ...

BOET

Die groen en goud is ook nie als nie.

JANA

Ek het nooit gedink ek sou daai woorde uit Pa se mond hoor nie.

BOET

'n Graad is 'n ding wat 'n man bybly as die skares van jou vergeet het.

JANA

Gaan jy nou swot?

ENELE

Ek hoop so.

BOET

Hy gaan. Hy doen nou daai oorbruggingskursus.

ENELE

Dalk sien jy my nog by Kowsies.

JANA

Dis fantasies!

ENELE

Dis nou net vir die swot. Ek het mos nie op skool so baie gefokus op die boeke nie. Nou moet ek inhaal.

JANA

Dis daai flippen skool wat julle so gedruk het met die rugby. Grey se eerstespan trek aan die kortste ent as dit kom by die boeke. Ek het altyd gesê jy moes eerder na die dorpskool gegaan het. Daar gaan dit nog oor die boeke.

BOET

Maar die man het 'n beurs gekry by Grey. 'n Man wat Cruyvenweek speel, kan mos nie in 'n gat-sonder-water-dorpie loop sukkel nie.

JANA

Dis hoekom die plattelandse skole so sukkel – oor daai Supersport-skole al ons talentvolle ouens stad toe trek.

ENELE

Wel, ek's nou terug.

JANA

Ek's bly. Wat behels die oorbruggingskursus?

ENELE

Ek moet beter punte kry. My matriek was mos nie met 'n vrystelling nie.

JANA

Jy't dan 'n A gekry vir wiskunde in matriek?

ENELE

Ja, maar die res was sleg. Ek kort 'n 60% vir Engels om in te kom. My Afrikaans is mos goed oor ek in Grey was, maar die Engels ... hai!

BOET

Dis 'n kak taal daai. Ek verstaan nie hoekom hulle julle nie Tswana laat vat nie.

JANA

Hemel, Pa.

BOET

Jammer, jammer!

ENELE

Nee, ek will Engels kan praat, Meneer. As ek in die stad gaan werk. Ná universiteit.

BOET

Julle wat almal so wil stad toe donder. Julle gaan nog sien wat ek en jou pa al lankal weet. Die gras is glad nie so groen daar tussen die hoë geboue nie.

ENELE

Dis seker so, Meneer. Maar my pa kon nooit gaan kyk nie. Ek wil ten minste gaan kyk.

2

Boet is uitgepass op die bank na die vorige aand in die kroeg. Hy het homself natgemaak. Jana kom in by die gangdeur. Sy roep na haar pa. Sy is besig om haar hare droog te vryf met 'n handdoek. Sy sien die veiligheidshek staan oop. Sy gaan soontoe en sluit dit.

JANA

Pa. Jy kan nie die ding in die nag ooplos nie. Ons is alleen in die middel van nêrens. Pa weet wat met die Du Preezs gebeur ...

Stilte.

Pa?

Sy sien Boet op die bank lê Sy gaan na hom toe. Sy skud hom wakker.

Pappa? Word wakker! Ons moet die volk gaan optel. Dis al ná ses.

Boet antwoord nie.

Pa! Word wakker! Jy moet in die stort kom.

Sy probeer hom oplik, maar sukkel om hom gelig te kry van die bank af. Hulle strompel na die badkamer, maar Boet struikel. Sy lig hom tot op 'n stoel. Hy sit met sy rug na die gehoor. Hy is steeds halfbewusteloos. Sy gaan haal 'n skottel met seep en water. Sy begin sy gesig was. Hy word steeds nie wakker nie. Sy trek sy hemp uit en begin sy bolyf was. Johan klop aan die deur. Jana probeer inderhaas sy hemp aantrek. Johan klop nog 'n paar keer en kom dan in met sy eie sleutels. Johan sien Jana wat haar pa was. Jana is ooglopend skaam namens haar pa en vir haarself. Jana loop na Johan.

JOHAN

Môre, môre, môre. Jis, Jaans! Hoe gaan dit met jou? Jis, maar jy's darem iets vir die oog, nê? Daai kêrels by Kovies weet seker nie wat hul getref het nie!

Hy soen haar op die mond.

JANA

Hi, oom. Jammer, ek was gou ...

JOHAN

Jy gee seker nie om nie. Ek het maar vir my 'n sleutel laat maak by die locksmiths op die dorp. Ek kom loer maar so elke nou en dan in by die ou grote.

JANA

Hy't hoeka die deur oopgelos gisteraand.

JOHAN

O hemel, dit kan nie gebeur nie. Hy weet goed wat met die Du Preezs langsaan gebeur het. Skuus, ek kom sluit gewoonlik agter hom, maar het gedog jy's gisteraand hier so ...

JANA

Jammer, ek het nie geweet hy sou só terugkom nie ...

Hulle kyk na hom. Albei isvir 'n oomblik in hulle eie gedagtes.

JOHAN

Ja. Gisteraand was hy kaatje van die baan. V'môre dooie likkewaan.

Jana glimlag vir haar oom. Hy hou daarvan. Boet val met 'n slag van die stoel af. Hy lê met sy rug op die grond.

JANA

Ons moet hom seker in die bed kry. Ek het probeer, maar ...

JOHAN

Nee, Jaans. Dis nie 'n vrou se werk nie. Ek sal hom nou vat. Slaan jy eers vir ons 'n ou boeretrosie aan.

JANA

Jammer, Oom! Ek bied nie eens aan nie. Ek het nog 'n kan op die stoof. Ek kry gou.

Jana gaan kombuis toe (van die verhoog af) om die koffie te gaan haal. Johan stap na sy broer. Hy kyk na die lappie en die skottel en lig die lappie vol agterdog op. Hy skud met sy voet aan Boet om seker te maak hy's uit.

JOHAN

Jir ... jy. Wat gaan aan met jou?

Boet kan dalk 'n vae kreungeluid maak, asof in sy slaap. Johan gaan sit weer en tel die Landbouweekblad op.

Jana kom in met die koffie op 'n skinkbord. Johan staan op as sy inkom om haar te help met die skinkbord.

JANA

Sit, Oom, ek skink sommer.

Johan gaan sit weer.

JOHAN

Hoe gaan dit daar op varsity? Swot julle nog hard?

JANA

Ja, Oom. Hoe gaan dit met tannie Marlene?

JOHAN

Nee, gaan aan, gaan aan. Dinge lol maar daar by die hospitaal. Sy verlang na die outyd toe sy nog medisyne gehad het om vir die boggers te gee. Die plek is rot en kaal besteel. Sy sê die mense kom nou maar met hul eie verbande.

JANA

Sjoe.

JOHAN

En sy doen tien man se werk. Die spul is mos lui, man. Ek sien jou pa meer as wat ek haar onder oë kry. Sy bly mos nou in die dorps huis. Ek sien haar net naweke.

JANA

Dareem is sy streng. Sy vat nie nonsens van ...

JOHAN

Yes, daai vrou van my is die mees bedonderde matrone wat jy in jou lewe sal teëkom. Arme etters is so bang vir haar. Sy brag so oor haar sale wat die gouste pasiënte ontslaan. Min weet sy, hulle kies maar om eerder siek te wees by die huis as by haar.

Hy lag bietjie vir homself. Sy glimlag. Stilte.

JANA

En met die nuwe ramme, Oom...? Ek sien daar's 'n nuwe stoet in die kampie by die silo's.

JOHAN

Ja-nee, ons kap aan, ons kap aan. Daai spul vir 'n appel en 'n ei by 'n jong outjie gekoop by v'jaar se landbouskou.

Stilte.

Jou pa het jou seker nie vertel nie. Hy stel nie meer belang in wat op die plaas aangaan nie. Eerste jaar sedert ons laaities was dat hy die skou mis.

JANA

Hy was mal oor die skou. Altyd vir my 'n toffieappel gekoop.

JOHAN

Dis nou so oorgevat deur die groot maatskappye – daar's nie eens meer pannekoek te koop nie. Net fênsie tente en hamburgers in grênd bokse.

JANA

Hoekom het hy nie gegaan nie? Hy sien elke jaar so uit nie die veilings en die ...

Sy kyk na haar pa.:

(fluister) Wat gaan aan met hom, Oom? Hoekom het hy nie gegaan nie?

JOHAN

Ons moet praat.

Hy kyk agtertoe om seker te maak sy broer kan hulle nie hoor nie.

JOHAN

Jy moet verstaan. Ek's nie 'n ou wat ... dis nie maklik vir ons klas van ouens om te kom staan en kla oor onsin nie. Maar ek sê nou vir jou: hy's nie lekker nie. Ek het hom laas so gesien ... net voor jou ma ...

JANA

Ek was klein, Oom. Hoe was hy?

JOHAN

Ek vergeet soms jy was nog 'n kind.

JANA

Ek was drie. Ek kan net onthou hy was heeltyd moeg. Hy wou nie dat ek saam met hom in die bakkie ry nie.

JOHAN

Hy raak so. Dan begin hy suip. Jy was seker te klein om dit te onthou.

JANA

Hy't nog altyd gedrink, Oom.

JOHAN

Ja, maar dis anders. Hy's erger. Die ergste wat ek hom nog gesien het. Hy begin tjank na hy drink en dan gaan grawe hy ou koeie op. Ek het die een aand oorgeslaap ... ek was bang hy ... hy't geluide gemaak dat hy ...

... man! Dat hy iets simpel sou doen ... jir kind, dis nie dinge wat 'n mens van jou pa wil hoor nie.

Jana is stil.

JOHAN

Elk geval. Ek het oorgeslaap op die bank. Toe sien ek hy kry nagmerries.

JANA

Hy kry hulle nog altyd.

JOHAN

Dis erg dié keer. Hy ruk en skree in sy slaap. As hy wakker word, tap die sweet by hom af. Hy's in een of ander gat vasgevang, man.

JANA

Ek onthou net my ma het die geweerkas toegesluit as hy so begin ... Wanneer het dit begin?

JOHAN

Dit was 'n simpel ding, man. Ons moes 'n lam uitsit. Ding se poot was seer. Die veeartsfooi sou drie keer die prys wees van die vleis wat 'n ou sou kry. Die ding se poot was blou gemerk. Enele het gesê dis die een met die blou poot. Ons gee mos nie vir die volk wapens nie, so ek en jou pa skiet maar as daar iets uitgesit moet word.

JANA

En toe?

JOHAN

Man, dis toe 'n hele boggerop want die donderse werker het toe twee lammers gaan staan en blou spuit. Die ander een moes ingeënt word. Toe jou pa die ding skiet en kyk na die karkas toe skeel die poot niks ... toe's dit die verkeerde een wat hy geskiet het. Jir, toe ... kyk ek was nie daar nie, maar die volk het vertel. Hy't blykbaar begin huil soos 'n kind. Net daar inmekaargesak. Voor hulle almal. Begin skree.

JANA

Hoekom? Hy skiet hordes lammers elke jaar, hoekom nou ...?

JOHAN

Hulle sê hy't heeltemal ingekonk. Oor en oor geskree "dis die verkeerde een". Wou die volk omtrent te lyf gaan.

JANA

Ek verstaan nie ... dis tog net ... ek weet nie hoekom dit hom so sou ontstel nie.

JOHAN

Ag, Jaans, ... jou pa het nog altyd dinge in sy verlede wat hom pla ... ek weet nie ...

JANA

Oom was saam met hom daar.

Johan is verward.

JOHAN

Nee, ek was by die marino's wat besig was ...

JANA

Ek bedoel: Oom was saam met hom op die Grens.

JOHAN

Ag jir kind, dis jarre gelede.

JANA

Dis duidelik nie vir hom so lank gelede nie. Dit klink of hy elke aand daar is.

JOHAN

'n Ou moet aanbeweeg. Jy kan nie gaan staan en dink en dink en dink nie. As 'n man te veel oor daai tyd dink, verander die dink gou in drink.

JANA

Hy't nooit met my daaroor gepraat nie. Al wat ek daarvan weet is die goed wat hy in sy slaap skree.

JOHAN

As hy 'n dop in het praat hy lekker Grensstories.

JANA

Nie voor my nie.

JOHAN

Jy's sy kind. En jy's 'n vrou.

JANA

Julle was saam daar. Wat het gebeur wat so erg is? Hoekom pla dit hom so?

JOHAN

Nee, die vet weet, Jaans. Ek en jou pa het dieselfe goed gesien. Elke ou vat die goed seker anders.

JANA

Hoekom het Oom my laat kom?

JOHAN

Hy's besig om dinge te laat glip – hy's agterlosig. 'n Hele trop hammels is nou die dag amper uitgewis oor hy vergeet het om die rekening by die veearts te betaal – toe sit ons sonder dips.

JANA

Jinne, Oom. So iets kan my ook oorkom. Dis seker nie so erg ...

JOHAN

Hy begin eers twaalfuur soggens werk. Ek wil nou nie kla nie ... maar...ek kan nie als op my eie doen nie. Ek kort 'n ekstra paar hande om aan die stuur ...

JANA

Hoekom stel Oom nie net nog 'n plaasbestuurder aan nie? Ek verstaan nie hoekom ek my studies ...

JOHAN

'n Bestuurder en 'n eienaar is twee baie verskillende dinge. Daai outjies van die landbou-kollege vry net na die juffrouens op die dorp. Ken nie van harde werk nie. Ek en jou pa is nou al deur hande vol.

JANA

Ek is nie 'n eienaar nie, Oom. Julle besit die grond.

JOHAN

Ag 'seblief. Ek en die tannie het nie kinders nie en jy's jou pa se enigste erfgenaam. Natuurlik kry jy die plase.

Stilte.

JANA

Ek het nie besef Oom se plase sou ook ...

JOHAN

Vir wie anders sou ek my grond gee? Ek is al verlief op jou van jy die eerste keer vir ons met jou skopfiets kom kuier het.

Jana glimlag.

JANA

Jinne, Oom, ek weet nie wat om ...

JOHAN

Moenie jou nou so vroom hou nie. Jy weet goed jy's my oogappel en jou pa ... ja, hy weet nie altyd hoe om dit te sê nie, maar ...

JANA

Ek weet. Hy hoef niks te sê nie. Ons verstaan mekaar.

Stilte.

Wat doen ons nou, Oom?

Sy wys na haar pa wat steeds bewusteloos lê.

JOHAN

Ou bul. Sawens skouperd. Smôrens flouperd. Laat hom maar slaap. Ek dink jy kan hom maar laat rus dan help jy my. Ons kyk hoe dit gaan die week. Jy kan bietjie saam met my kom, dan wys ek jou hoe die dinge loop vandat jy weg is.

JANA

Ek was darem nie so lank weg nie, Oom.

JOHAN

Vier maande is lank ja. En twee weke.

JANA

Oom tel die dae.

JOHAN

Ja man, ons het jou gemis, man!

Jana glimlag.

JOHAN

Ek gaan jou nou dinge wys en vertel wat jou pa soms van jou af weggehou het op die plaas. Ons moet jou nou oplei as ons opvolger.

JANA

Hoe bedoel, Oom? Wat het hy van my weggehou?

JOHAN

Niks ernstig nie. Ek bedoel net jy's nou die opvolger. Ek dink jou pa het altyd gedink ... ek weet nie wat hy gedink het nie ...

JANA

Ek verstaan nie.

JOHAN

Ek dink jou pa ...

JANA

Oom kan maar praat. Ek het al als gehoor.

JOHAN

Ek dink jou pa het dalk gedink jy sou trou en dat die knaap die storie sou oorneem. Toe jy gaan landbou swot het, het jy ons eintlik albei uitgeboul.

JANA

Ek het altyd gehelp en geboer, Oom. Ek verstaan nie hoekom dit so 'n skok was nie.

JOHAN

Nee, nee, jy's heeltemal reg. Ek en jou pa is maar outyds, man. In die tannie se tyd het jy óf 'n nurse óf 'n onderwyser geword. En jy's so oulike girl, ek het gedink jy sou in jou eerstejaar al afhaak en opskop.

JANA

Oom en my pa is die enigste mans in my lewe.

JOHAN

Ditsem! Ek sê ook daai ding. Ek sê heeltyd vir jou pa hy moet jou laat staan. Jy kort mos nie 'n ander man wat jou kom rondorder nie.

JANA

My pa het nog nooit sulke geluide gemaak nie. Nie voor my nie. Ek het nie geweet hy wil so graag hê ek moet trou nie.

JOHAN

Onthou ek en jy – ons is al wat hy het. Die trou storie – hy wil hê jy moet huis toe kom. Hy dink seker as jy afhaak, gaan jy permanent terug plaas toe kom. Maar moet nou nie vir hom sê ek praat uit die huis uit nie.

JANA

Ek is mos deel van die huis oom.

JOHAN

Natuurlik!!! Skuus ek praat nou deur my agterent. Al wat ek probeer sê ... ek weet jou pa wil hê jy moet trou en so ... maar ek dink nie jy kort 'n man nie. Ek en jou pa is mos hier om na jou te kyk. Jy kan als doen wat jy wil ...

JANA

Ek wil graag klaar swot, Oom.

JOHAN

Jy hét mos nou al 'n graad, man Jaans.

JANA

Hierdie een kan ek mee navorsing doen, Oom.

JOHAN

Ons is al wat hy het. Ek dink dis goed dat jy terug is. Ek's eintlik al wat hom ... ek weet nie wat met hom sal gebeur as ek iets oorkom nie. Hy's afhanklik. Jy weet mos. Ons is deur baie kak. Skuus. Verskoon. Ons is nie meer gewoond om 'n dame ... ek praat nou eintlik uit my beurt. Ons wag maar vir die ou grote om wakker te word, dan hoor ons wat hy dink.

JANA

Ek dink nie hy gee regtig om nie.

JOHAN

Dis nie oor jou nie. Dis ... dinge ... lank terug se dinge wat hom pla.

JANA

Ek weet, Oom.

Johan maak of hy die koppies wil begin uitdra.

JANA

Los, Oom. Martha sal vanmiddag opwas.

JOHAN

Laat ons weg wees.

JANA

Ek het vir Enele gesê ons kan werk aan sy Engels vir 'n uur.

(Sy kyk na haar horlosie.)

Hy moes eintlik al hier gewees het.

JOHAN

Dis mos Afrika-tyd met dié spul. Jy weet mos.

JANA

Ek wou juis met oom gepraat het- oor hom.

JOHAN

Ek luister.

JANA

Kyk, ek wil nou nie voor op die wa wees nie, maar ... ná wat oom nou vir my gesê het. Ek weet nie, dis net 'n voorstel.

JOHAN

Ja?

JANA

In my navorsing kry ek nou baie te doen met AgriSA, en die ouens wat aan die beleide werk en so ... Dit lyk nie goed nie, Oom. Ons gaan iets móét doen. Proaktief wees. Ek dink die ouens wat dit gaan maak is die's wat die stuur in hul eie hande vat. Ons gaan moet begin dink aan iets meer...inklusief.

JOHAN

Jir kind, ek sal daai spul almal hof toe sleep as hul by ons kom eis. Jou oupagrootjie het hierdie grond fair en square gekoop. Sy gat af gewerk om ...

JANA

Ek weet, Oom. Dis nie die enigste bedreiging nie. Hulle wil nou caps plaas op hoe groot ons mag boer. Ons val onder die “groot plaas”-kategorie. Die beleid wat nou by die hof lê wil dit cap op 50 000 hektar. Ons is het al in Oupa se tyd groter geboer as dit. Ons gaan daai grond verloor as ons nie begin dink oor aandeelhouders nie.

JOHAN

Mens kan mos nie vir ‘n ou iets weggee wat hy niks aan gewerk het nie. Dis verkeerd.

JANA

Ek besef dit, Oom. Maar Enele se oupagrootjie het saam met oupa Neels hier aangekom. Hulle het saam met ons gewerk. Soms langer en harder. Ek weet ook nie hoeveel hy hul vergoed het nie. Die mense sê hy was maar ‘n kwaai ou.

JOHAN

Die volk het hom respekteer. Hy’t baie meer uit hul gekry as wat my pa kon regkry. My pa het die leisels laat slaplê.

JANA

Hy was ‘n baie beter boer. Oupa het drie plase bygekoop.

Johan is stil. Wanneer hy nie reageer nie gaan Jana voort.

Ek dink ons moet begin dink daaroor om die volk te betrek.

JOHAN

Jy klink nes jou pa. Hy's nog altyd te hand om die blaas met die spul.

JANA

Jinne, Oom, dis soos familie. Ant Koeka het Oom se doeke omgeruil. En myne ook.

JOHAN

Jy kan nie wil boer uit skuldgevoelens nie.

JANA

Ek sê dit oor ons nie 'n ander opsie sien nie. Ons kan nie net vir môre boer nie – ons móét dink aan oormôre. Dis nie oor ek skuldig voel nie. Ek probeer nugter oor die saak dink. Dis al manier hoe ons 'n buffer kan kry tussen ons en die regering. Ek luister na daai vergaderings. Die manne is kwaad. Hulle soek bloed. Daar's g'n logika nie.

JOHAN

Maar dit het niks met ons te doen nie! Dis nie Natal of die Oos-Kaap waar grond afgevat is ...

JANA

Dis nie hoe die regering dink nie, Oom. Ons is wit en ons boer. En as ons wil bly boer, gaan ons meer progressief moet dink.

JOHAN

Nou wat stel jy voor?

JANA

Enele.

JOHAN

Wat van hom? Hy's nog nat agter die ore.

JANA

Hy's so oud soos ek. Hy's slim, Oom. En sy familie is die langste al op die plaas.

JOHAN

Ou Jakes kom al net so lank, maar ...

JANA

(voltooi sy sin) Maar hy's elke naweek dronk.

JOHAN

Mmm.

Hulle is stil.

JANA

Enele is slim, Oom. Hy was op Grey. Hy kan met die ander boere werk. Praat goed Afrikaans. Hy't 'n kop vir syfers.

JOHAN

Hy't dan nie vrystelling gekry nie. Hoe wil jy hê moet hy boer?

JANA

Maar Oom, Oom het mos ook nie ... ek bedoel ... (sy tel haar woorde, besef sy speel op AVBOB se stoep.)

... was Oom op universiteit? Nie dat dit ...

JOHAN

Dis baie anders. Ek het grootgeword ... my pa en my oupa ... (*besef sy argument dra geen water nie, gee dan op*) Ag, jy weet wat ek bedoel.

JANA

Ek dink dit was die rugby wat hom gegooi het, Oom. Hy't baie goed gedoen in die laerskool voor hy Bloem toe is. Daai skole gee nie om oor die kinders se akademie nie. Druk hulle net om meer ouens te hê in die Cruyvenweek-span.

JOHAN

Nou wat wil jy hê moet hy hier doen? Moet ons die plaas onderverdeel soos kommuniste? Ek en jou pa het hard baklei dat dit nie gebeur nie en kyk waar sit ons nou.

JANA

Ek dink Oom moet daaraan dink as 'n besigheid. Ons is nou te groot. Nou kan ons aandele verkoop aan die publiek.

JOHAN

As jy dink die volk gaan jou betaal vir aandele is jy naïef.

JANA

Ons kan begin deur hul bonusse te omskep in aandele. Of 'n persentasie van die lone.

JOHAN

Dis nou als goed en wel, maar hoe wil jy dit verduidelik vir 'n klomp mense sonder verstand? Meeste van hulle het nie eers standerd vyf nie.

JANA

Baie van die jonger ouens het standerd agt. En daar's 'n hele paar met matriek. En ons het Enele. Hy's geliefd onder die volk. Hy's die goue seun. As daar iemand is wat hul kan oortuig, is dit hy.

JOHAN

Wil hy nie stad toe gaan ná universiteit nie? Sodra hul geleerd is, foeter hul almal stad toe.

JANA

Ek sal met hom praat. Ons kan hom oortuig. Ons móét. As ons vir hom 'n beurs gee op universiteit bind dit hom ten minste vir 'n paar jaar. Dalk begin hy inkoop in die idee. Daar's regtig niemand anders wat met die ander boere én die volk sal kan werk nie.

JOHAN

Die res is useless.

JANA

Ek sal nou nie so sê nie ...maar hy's definintief meer ... gepas.

Enele klop aan die deur.

JOHAN

Gepraat van die duiwel. Ek moet gaan. Sien jou nou-nou. Ek kry jou negeuur by die kraal langs die silo's.

JANA

Dis reg, Oom. Yes, Enele.

ENELE

Haai. Môre, Meneer.

JOHAN

Môre. Sluit maar die veiligheidshek, Jaans. Deesdae kom hulle sommer helder oordag.

Hy soengroet haar. Johan loop uit.

JANA

(aan Enele) Sit. Sit jou boeke neer. Ek kry net gou 'n pen. Waar's hy nou ... ek het hom nou net hier neergesit ... (sy kry dit) Ah great. Het hom. So? Waarmee sukkel jy? Dis eerstetaal nê? Letterkunde?

ENELE

Ja. Poetry.

JANA

Maybe we should speak English so you get used to it?

ENELE

My aksent is snaaks. Ek draai die woorde om. Ek dink anyway dit gaan meer oor die skryf as die praat.

JANA

The talking helps. It'll help me too. My English is bad also. Ek't goed gedoen in matriek maar die praat vang my. (kyk na potlood) This pencil is stomp.

Stilte.

Enele kry 'n skerpmaaker uit haar potloodsakkie. Sy begin potlode skerpmaak.

JANA

So what do you want to do when you finish at university?

Enele is skaam vir sy aksent.

ENELE

My father's cousin lives in Johannesburg. I want to go live there and find a job.

JANA

And leave your family here?

ENELE

I'll send money back. Black tax. Ek dink hulle wil hê ek moet gaan. 'n Beter lewe maak.

JANA

En die plaas?

Enele lag vir haar.

Wat? Is dit 'n slegte lewe?

ENELE

Die plaas beteken vir jou en vir my twee baie verskillende dinge.

JANA

So jy wil nie meer boer nie?

ENELE

Ek boer nie.

JANA

Natuurlik boer jy!

ENELE

Mens kort grond om te boer.

JANA

En as jy grond kry? ... Sou jy bly?

ENELE

Ek weet nie. Ek dink nie so nie.

JANA

Hoekom soek julle dan grond?

Enele lig sy skouers op. Hy lyk ongemaklik.

Kyk, nê ... ons kom al van babatyd saam, ek en jy. Jou ma het ná my ma weg is ... sy't my ... sy't ons grootgemaak. Ons is soos familie – ek mag jou vra. Reguit. Die enigste drie swart vriende wat ek op universiteit het herhaal net heeltyd die “black first land first”-storie. Maar as ek vra waarmee hulle gaan boer as hul uiteindelik die land het: bekstil. Hulle wil Sandton toe gaan, man! Verduidelik dit vir my, asseblief, ek ...

ENELE

Ek dink nie ons moet ... moet ek my gedig uithaal of wil jy eers oor die Shakespeare ...?

JANA

Jammer. Ek wil nie aanstoot gee nie. Ek ...

Hulle is al twee stil. Jana is bietjie skaam.

ENELE

Ek verstaan. Julle is boere. Dit gaan oor die grond ... wat die plaas ... produseer, oes wat ook al. Vir ons is die plaas ... die plaas is ons huis. Die plek waarnatoe mens teruggaan. Weer en weer.

JANA

Jammer ... verskoon my. Jy dink seker ek's 'n poephol, maar ... ek probeer verstaan ... jou tuiste? Waarna jy terugkeer? In jou Land Rover oor Desember? Terwyl jou ouma 'n 2x2-veldjie mielies plant om vir jou samp te maak oor krismis? Dis nostalgie. Dit maak nie sin nie.

ENELE

Min van ons wat terugkom uit die stad ry 'n Land Rover. Meeste kom met die taxi. Net my oom het dit gemaak.

JANA

Maar dis nog erger! Om weg te trek as jy wéét jy brandarm in die stad gaan wees. En dan nog ‘n massiewe deel van jou piepklein salaris huis toe te moet stuur en die bietjie wat oorbly gaan spandeer op vervoer huis toe oor Desember. Plaasarbeid betaal dalk ‘n fraks slegter as bouwerk of iets in die stad – maar jy weet self hoe donders duur als daar is.

Hul begin oor mekaar te praat.

ENELE

Ek dink ons moet my Engels

JANA

Maar dit gaan nooit oor die werklikheid nie. Dit gaan oor die droom. En as mens realisties na die saak kyk, sê hul jy’s “privileged”. As ek nog een keer daai woord hoor, gaan ek ...

ENELE

Is jy “disadvantaged”?

JANA

Natuurlik nie! Natuurlik doen my ouers ... my pa ... hy doen goed. Ek kan universiteit toe gaan. Ek’s nie só ’n groot poephhol nie. Ek besef ek is bevoorreg. Ek verstaan net nie hoekom my priviledge my stom moet maak nie. Hoekom dit beteken ek my bek moet hou as almal stad toe trek en daar van ons plase vakansieoorde gemaak word nie. Sonder diere. Sonder oeste.

Enele skuif sy papiere voorentoe.

JANA

Jammer. Ek wil nie aanstoot ... ek’s net ... my pa. Ek’s bietjie besorgd.

Enele is ongemaklik. Hy begin skryf. Jana sien hy wil nie oor plaasdinge praat nie.

JANA

Fine. Watse gedig is dit?

ENELE

(kyk af en begin lees) “Anthem for a doomed youth”. Deur Wilfred Owen.

JANA

Ek onthou hom! Ons het hom ook in matriek gedoen. Die een oor die soldaat en die koeie. Hy was mos self ‘n soldaat nê?

ENELE

(begin lees) “Wilfred Owen was a soldier in the First World War. The extreme violence and death he was exposed to during in battle severely traumatised the young poet. His poems are marked by these experiences in combat. War and trauma is the subject matter Owen is best known for.” Dis intens.

Boet begin stadig wakker word. Hy kan stadigbeweeg agter die bank. Enele en Jana sien hom nie.

JANA

Ek onthou nie veel nie. Ek onthou net die juffrou, drol wat sy was ... sy’t gehammer op die “unheroic nature of war”. Dat die ou half sê jy’s nie ‘n hero nie. Lees dit gou ...

Boet luister na die gedig. Die gehoor kan sy gesig sien. Terwyl Enele lees maak Jana nota’s.

ENELE

“What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.”
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.”

JANA

Jana wys vir hom haar notas.

Mens spreek dit “bugles” uit. Het jy nota’s by?

Boet gaan lê weer op sy rug.

Jana kyk in Enele se boek.

Ja. Dit praat van die begrafnis ding. Hoor jy? Dis amper soos ‘n stoet. Die ouens word opgeoffer soos vee. In plaas van ‘n begrafnis met gebed en musiek is die enigste geluide wat hulle hoor gewere. Die granate is soos die klokke wat by ‘n begrafplaas sou wees.

ENELE

So hulle het nie ‘n funeral nie?

JANA

Ja, dis die punt. Hulle het nie ‘n fênsie begrafnis nie. Of ... nie ‘n heroic begrafnis of iets nie. Soos die klokke wat gelui word as die queen doodgaan nie. Dis nes ‘n klomp koeie wat geslag word.

ENELE

My ma sou die gedig opskeer. As iemand by ons nie ‘n goeie begrafnis kry nie. Eish.

Jana grinnik.

JANA

Jou ma sal dit verlóór.

ENELE

Al die nkukus.

JANA

Ja vader. Jou ouma kon skree. Onthou jy daai keer toe my pa oor die radio gevra het hoekom daar ‘n ambulans by ons was. Toe’s dit jou ouma wat nog huil oor haar kleinneef.

Hulle lag.

Hel, ons moet seker swot!

JANA

Wat beteken “pall”? En “pallor”? Staan dit in die boek? Die definisie?

Hulle soek saam in die boek.

Skielik onthou Enele en krap in sy sak.

ENELE

Wag, ek het ‘n woordeboek!

Jana gryp dit en begin blaai.

JANA

(terwyl sy soek) Die notas sê dat hulle praat van “boys”, en nie mans nie. So manlikheid is nie gekoppel aan oorlog nie.

ENELE

“The unheroic nature of war.”

JANA

Wag ek het dit. “Pall – a cloth spread over a coffin, hearse, or tomb.”.

ENELE

(lees) “The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;”

JANA

Pallor beteken “an unhealthy pale appearance” soos in “the deathlike pallor of his face”.

ENELE

So dis die soldate se meisies.

JANA

Seker nê? Die mense wat agter bly. Diè wat mans verloor in die oorlog. Lees gou weer daai deel.

ENELE

Hy lees.

“The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,”

JANA

Hoekom “patient”? Hoekom is hul geduld die meisies se blomme. Soms wens ek die mense wil net by die punt uitkom.

ENELE

Hulle wag seker vir die soldate om terug te kom.

JANA

Of nie terug te kom nie.

ENELE

(lees) “Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.”

JANA

Dood. Die skemer is die dood. Die blinding word gesak. Dis nag.

ENELE

Dis diep.

JANA

Mmm. Verstaan jy dit?

ENELE

Ek dink so.

JANA

Wat sê die ou? Jy moet sê “spreker” dink ek. The speaker of the poem. Wat sê die spreker in die gedig?

ENELE

Oorlog is kak.

Jana lag.

JANA

(klap hande) Bravo!

Enele glimlag.

Luister. Ek weet van al die politiek en ek weet die stad ... ek weet dit klink beter. Maar ek dink regtig nie dit is nie. Ek dink jy kan net soveel bereik op die plaas as in die stad. Indien nie meer nie. Almal wil stad toe gaan- hier is daar g'n kompetisie nie. As jy bly kan jy 'n vol lewe hê, sonder die stad se leë beloftes.

ENELE

My pa het hier gebly. En sy pa.

JANA

Ek weet, ek weet! Maar dinge is nou anders. Ons moet begin bykom met wat aangaan in die land.

ENELE

Hoekom?

JANA

Want dis die regte ding om te doen. Hoe bedoel jy hoekom?

ENELE

Hoekom nou?

JANA

Dinge is nou anders. Ons het nou die kans om die regte ding te doen. Jy kan opmaak vir als wat jou oupa en jou pa nooit gehad het nie.

Enele is stil.

Jy ken my. Het ek al ooit vir jou gejok. Jou in die steek gelaat?

ENELE

Wat wil jy hê?

JANA

Ek wil hê ... ons wil hê ... ons wil jou betrek by die boerdery. As 'n aandeelhouer. Ons kan betaal vir jou studies aan die universteit – soos 'n beurs. En dan kom werk jy hier.

Enele is geskok.

ENELE

As 'n Baas?

JANA

Ja, so iets.

ENELE

Hao! Sho sho sho sho.

Hy is stil.

JANA

En? Wat dink jy?

Enele skud net sy kop.

JANA

Jy hoef nie nou vir my 'n antwoord te gee nie. Ek dog ek toets net die waters. Ek dink regtig jy sal goed wees. Bleddie goed.

Boet beweeg skielik. Enele skrik hom boeglam.

Pa.

ENELE

Môre, Oom.

Boet grom 'n groet.

Jana gluur vir haar pa. Sy is woedend.

JANA

(vir Enele, maar eintlik vir Boet) Kom. Dis al amper middag. Ons moet gaan help met die inentings.

Boet is nog half dronk.

BOET

Jy lieg! Dis g'n agtermiddag nie.

Jana is effe verleë dat haar pa so praat voor hulle. Sy staan haastig op.

ENELE

Kan ons nie net gou deur die gedig ...

JANA

Ons moet gaan. Ons kan daaroor gesels in die bakkie. Ek moet in elk geval 'n draai by die Koöperasie maak.

Boet grinnik oor die Koöperasie-opmerking.

JANA

Wat?

BOET

Niks. Jy laaik mos van uit die huis uit praat by die Koöperasie. Sê vir Retief Meyer hy moet sy skynheilige bek van my afhou.

Jana skud net haar kop.

BOET

Wat?

Jana is stil. Gluur hom net aan vol walging.

Ag! Wat weet jy?

Hy kyk vir Enele.

En jy! Niks. Julle is kinders.

Hy strompel van die verhoof af. Enele en Jana kyk hom agterna.

ENELE

Shit.

JANA

Ek weet.

ENELE

Wat gaan jy ...? Wat gaan ons doen?

JANA

Ek het die geweerkas se sleutel weggesteek. En die kluis.

ENELE

Mmm ...

Stilte.

Is jy oukei?

JANA

Ek's fine. Ek's gewoond daaraan.

ENELE

Jy moet pasop. Onthou jy toe ons skool toe is en jy daai brief gekry het. Toe hy die pille ge —....

JANA

Ek weet.

ENELE

Moet hy nie na 'n hospitaal of iets ... of 'n rehab gaan nie?

Jana lag.

JANA

Boet Malan? Na 'n hospitaal? Daar's nie 'n manier nie ... hy sal tien dode sterf voor hy erken daar's iets fout.

ENELE

Ek's bang hy ... ek wil nie ... ek's bang hy ...

JANA

(kwaai) Hy sal nie! Oukei? Kom.

Jana sit haar John Deere-pet op. Sy loop agter Enele by die deur uit en sluit die veiligheidshek.

3

Die sitkamer is leeg. Jana sluit die veiligheidshek oop en kom binne. Haar hand bloei. Sy het dit vasgebond met 'n lap. Dit is al middag.

JANA

Pa? Paa???

Boet kom in vanuit sy kamer. Hy lyk deur die slaap.

JANA

Hemel Pa, dis al middag!

BOET

Jir kind, wat het jy aangevang?

JANA

Bietjie van 'n ongeluk gehad met die saag ... ons het die heining reg— ...

BOET

Wat de donder het jy met die saag staan en ...

JANA

Ek het oom Johan gehelp met die ...

Boet loop ontstoke rond soos hy praat.

BOET

(kwaad) Daai donderse broer van my moet ook altyd my mense in sy ...

JANA

Pappa! Ek het hom net gehelp. Soos ek jou altyd gehelp het met die ...

BOET

Vader kind, jy bloei oral. Ek het jou nooit met die elektriese saag ...

JANA

(kalm) Dis net 'n snytjie. Dit lyk erger as wat dit is. Waar's die pleisters?

BOET

Wag ek kry.

Boet loop vinnig na binne en kom terug met 'n roomyshouer vol verbande, pleisters, ens.

BOET

Sit. Wag laat ek sien.

Hy gaan sit langs haar op die bank en begin haar wond versigtig verpleeg.

BOET

Hoekom het jy nou saam met hom loop gaan?

JANA

Hy kort hulp op die plaas, Pa.

BOET

Hy kan mos die volk vra om te loop help.

Jana is stil.

BOET

Wat?

JANA

Niks nie, Pa. Ek dink sommer net.

BOET

Wat dink jy?

JANA

Ek dink pa is jaloers. Pa wil nooit hê ek moet saam met oom Johan gaan werk nie. Op skool. En vakansies. Pa wou altyd by wees.

BOET

Jy verbeel jou. Hy's my broer. Hy's net onverskillig. Altyd hierdie klas van goed wat gebeur onder sy hand.

JANA

Dit was my skuld, Pa. Ek het vergeet om die

BOET

Hy kyk nie wat hy doen nie. Hy's onverskillig. Ons ma het hom altyd gewetter oor hy nie sy goed oppas nie. My goed ook gebreek en weggesmyt.

JANA

Watse goed, Pa?

BOET

Ek het so 'n speelgoedkarretjie, 'n Datsun-bakkietjie, gehad. Dit was my krismisboks. Dit was my geliefkoosde besitting daai. Oral saam gedra op die plaas. As ons gaan kleilat gooi het saam met die klonkies is die bakkietjie ook saam. Hy was so 'n goudgeelkleur. Canary-geel. Johan steel toe die dinge en gooi dit in die dam. Hy sê hy wou kyk of dit kan dryf. Kak.

(besef skielik hy't gevloek voor sy dogter) Skuus. Twak, man. Hy wou net die ding wegmaak oor hy geweet het dis myne.

JANA

Hoe oud was julle?

BOET

Nee, ek weet nie. Seker so ses. Sewe. Voor skool.

JANA

Haai, Pa. Dis darem baie klein. Kinders is maar snaaks. Vat net wat hulle wil hê.

BOET

Party grootmense bly kinders.

JANA

Pa, ... ek het gedink om dalk die semester af te vat. Bietjie uit te help hierso. Net tot Pa beter voel.

BOET

Daar's g'n niks fout met my nie.

JANA

Oom Johan sê hy't my hulp nodig met die ...

BOET

Wat? Met wat?

JANA

Wat gaan aan, Pa? Hy's jou broer. Dis my oom.

BOET

Hy is. Ek weet wat ek in hom het.

JANA

Hy's besorgd oor Pa. Hy gee om oor Pa. Die tannie is maar ...

BOET

Nee, daai vrou is 'n koue een. Moeilik. Behalwe vir jou is hy eintlik al— ...

JANA

Ek weet, Pa.

BOET

As hy iets moet oorkom ... Ek weet nie of ek meer kans sien ... of ek sou kon aangaan nie ... Dit weet ek.

JANA

(effe seergemaak, baie subtiel)

Ek sal nog hier wees.

BOET

Ek weet ... maar ek en jou oom Ons het al baie dinge saam gesien. Dinge wat net ons weet. Dis 'n anderster klas van verbinding as jy so saam deur baie kak is. *(beseef hy't weer gevloek voor sy dogter.)* Jammer.

JANA

Nou hoekom wil Pa my van hom af weghou?

BOET

Ek sê mos jy verbeel jou. Hy's net onverskillig. Dis al. Hy's roekeloos. Ek sê net jy moet pasop.

JANA

Pa weet Pa sal altyd my enigste Pa bly. Ek sal altyd Pa eerste ...

BOET

Ja, ja, ek weet, man. Wees jy net versigtig. Dra maar jou handskoene as hy in die rondte is.

JANA

Gaan Pa stort vandag?

BOET

Jy raak nou al te parmantig vir jou size. Loop maak klaar wat jy begin het daar by die skaap. Ek sien jou vanaand. Ek sal vir ons braai.

JANA

Dis reg. Ek het die tjops uitgehaal om te ontdooi. (*sy loop uit, onthou skielik iets en draai om*)

O ja, Pa. Ek wou nog met jou gesels oor iets. Oor Enele.

BOET

Jou oom het my vertel.

JANA

En? Wat dink Pa?

BOET

Ek wou dit al jarre doen.

Jana is geskok.

JANA

Regtig?

Boet skud sy kop.

Nou hoekom het Pa nie?

Hy trek sy skouers op.

BOET

Ek en jou oom. Ons kyk maar anders na die dinge.

JANA

Jis Pa, maar al voel hy anders ... Soos die politiek nou gaan ... liewer 'n halwe eier as 'n leë dop. Ons gaan niks oorhou as ons nie veranderinge maak nie.

BOET

Jy klink soos hy. 'n Man moet dit doen, want dis die regte ding om te doen. My pa het al begin grond afteken. Klein lappies vir die werkers in sy tyd.

JANA

Regtig?

BOET

Maar hulle het dit weer verkoop. Jou oom. Hy't dit teruggekoop.

JANA

Vir 'n goeie prys? Was dit regdig?

BOET

Seker soortvan. Maar die spul suip, man. Hulle sal hulle kinders verpand vir 'n papsak. Hy't hul geboortereg gevat vir 'n pot lensiesop.

JANA

Hy was heel oop gewees vir die idee toe ek met hom praat. Oor aandeelhouders en so.

BOET

Ek weet nie. Dalk het hy tot sy sinne gekom. Maar jy's reg. Enele sal moet voorvat. Dis 'n opperste mannetjie daai. Murg in sy pype. En hy's bitter skerp. Vandat hy terug is, loop dinge seepglad. Hulle het my nie eens meer nodig nie.

JANA

Pa weet dis nie waar nie.

BOET

Ek's nou oud, Jaans. Ek het niks oor om te gee nie.

JANA

Ons kort Pa. Dis volk vra healtyd waar Pa is. En ek. Ons kort raad en ...

Boet glimlag hartseer.

BOET

Sluit maar die veiligheidshek. Hulle kom deesdae in die middel van die dag.

JANA

Oom Johan het gesê.

BOET

Ek hou maar my wapen gelaai.

Hy wys vir haar hoe hy sy wapen by onder die bank se kussing bere.

JANA

Bye, Pa.

Jana loop uit.

4

Jana is besig om die plaas se boeke te doen by die tafel. Sy konsentreer hard.

Boet kom ingestap met sy sleutel in die hand. Jana kyk skaars op.

JANA

Waarnatoe gaan Pa?

BOET

Bietjie loer wat in die dorp aangaan.

JANA

Sal Pa asseblief Pa se sleutels vir tannie Bessie gee. Sy't gesê sy sal my bel as ek Pa moet kom haal.

BOET

Watse kak is dit dat my kind my moet kom haal uit die kroeg? Hoekom praat jy met die dorpsmense agter my rug? Jy weet hoe gou 'n skinderstorie versprei in die dorp. Soos 'n veldbrand.

Jana se aandag is by haar boeke. Sy antwoord half in gedagte.

JANA

Waar daar 'n rokie is, is daar 'n vuurtjie.

BOET

Wat sê jy daar, meisiekind? Jy moenie vir jou kom astant hou nie. Jy's nie te oud ...

JANA

(lag sarkasties) Wat? Ek's nie te oud vir wat nie? Gaan jy my nou pak gee?

BOET

Julle kinders is onbeskof! Jy praat nie met jou pa so nie.

JANA

steeds , uitdagend

Jammer. Gaan PA my nou pak gee?

Boet storm uit die huis uit. Hy los die veiligheidshek oop. Jana se aandag en konsentrasie is by haar werk en sy kom nie agter die hek staan oop nie. Sy tik op 'n skootrekenaar en skryf vir 'n hele ruk. Net plaasgeluide is hoorbaar totdat daar 'n geristel buite is.

Jana staan op en gaan na die veiligheidshek wat oopstaan. Die gehoor sien slegs haar reaksie op die skaduwee agter die hek. Sy skrik haar boeglam. Sy gryp die pistool op tussen die bank se kussings wat haar pa vir haar gewys het en hou dit agter haar rug.

JANA

(aarselend, beangs)

Ja?

ENELE

Haai. Ek het verbygeloop toe sien ek die hek staan oop. Toe kom check ek net of als orraait is.

Jana sug hoorbaar van verligting.

JANA

Ja, perfek! Baie, baie dankie. Wag, ek het ekstra vleis uitgesit. Vat saam.

Sy loop uit en gaan haal 'n paar tjops vir Enele.

JANA

Baie dankie. Lekker aand. Ek sien jou seker môre vir die Engels.

ENELE

Yes.

Hy vat aan sy pet om te groet en loop uit.

Jana sluit die veiligheidshek met 'n bos sleutels en skakel die lig af dat dit eeffe donker is. Daar is net 'n lampie aan by haar werktafel.

Sy rus teen die muur met die pistool steeds in haar hand en sak omtrent inmekaar. Sy het verskriklik groot geskrik.

Stadig gaan sit sy en begin weer werk. Sy het pas begin wanneer sy weer 'n geritsel hoor by die deur.

JANA

Hallo?

Sy kry haar geweer en loop weer versigtig na die deur toe.

'Die klank van 'n sleutel in die slot word gehoor.

Johan kom binne.

JANA

Oom! Ek het nou so geskrik, ek dog ...

Johan kom in en omhels haar. Jana lyk verlig om hom te sien. Hy soen haar op haar mond. Sy lyk verbouereerd.

JOHAN

Ek is lief vir jou.

JANA

Oom ek...

Jana begin ongemaklik wegruk. Johan gryp haar hardhandig.

JANA

Nee!

Hy druk haar teen die muur vas en soen haar sodat sy nie asem kry nie. Hy gryp haar boude vas, ens.

JANA

Stop! Ek

Sy gryp na die pistool op die rak. Johan sien dit. Hy gryp die pistool en hou dit teen haar kop. Hy lei haar van die verhoog af in die gang. Die verkragting word gehoor van die gehoor af.

Stilte.

Johan staan op en trek sy broek op. Hy maak sy broek rustig weer vas soos hy weer op die verhoog kom.

JOHAN

Moenie worry nie, Jaans. Die safety was aan.

Hy sit die geweer op die rakkie neer. Hy kyk nonchalant na die rekeninge op die tafel.

Sê vir jou pa ek het die veearts se rekening betaal. Ek wou hom vra om vanjaar die boeke te doen, maar ek dink nie hy kan nou daai klas van stres hanteer nie. Enige klein dingetjie sal hom nou laat ineenstort. Ons moet hom maar beskerm. Ek sluit sommer hier. Mens weet nooit wat kan gebeur nie. Hou maar die pistool naby.

Jana staan op en verskyn op die verhoog terwyl Johan die bg. sê. Daar is bloed op haar kortbroek- sy was 'n maagd. Haar broek is geskeur. Johan gaan by die deur uit en sluit die veiligheidshek. Sy gaan sit op die bank en staar geskok voor haar uit.

Enele klop aan die deur. Wanhopig. Hy is natgesweet – hy het soontoe gehardloop.

Jana skrik as sy die klop hoor. Sy kruip weg agter die bank.

ENELE

Jana!! Jana?? Maak oop! Wat gaan aan??

JANA

Niks. Ek's fine.

ENELE

Ek kan hoor jy huil. Wat gaan aan maak oop!!

Ek gaan die polisie bel! MAAK OOP!

Jana staan op en sluit die veiligheidshek oop.

Ek het jou hoor skree en toe sien ek jou oom ry weg. Het iemand ...?

Hy verstar as hy die bloed op haar bene sien.

ENELE

Che! Che che che. Masepa.

Jana gaan sit.

Dis jou oom. Dit was hy, nè?

Jana huil.

Jou pa. Ons moet jou pa bel. Is hy in die dorp? Jy moet 'n rape kit kry.

JANA

Nee.

ENELE

Hoekom nie?

JANA

My oom. Sy DNA. Hulle gaan weet. Hulle gaan weet dis hy.

ENELE

Hulle moet weet! Hy moet tronk toe gaan.

JANA

Maar dan gaan my pa weet.

ENELE

En?

JANA

Hy gaan dit nie maak nie. Hy sal homself skiet. Ek sweer.

ENELE

Nee! Jy moet sê.

JANA

Dit sal hom breek.

Hulle is stil.

ENELE

Wat moet ek .. wat kan ek doen? Ek sweer ek sal hom skiet.

JANA

Nee. My pa. Dit sal hom knak. Jy moet gaan.

ENELE

Ek kan jou nie so los nie.

JANA

Ek het 'n geweer.

ENELE

Maar dis jou ... dis nie 'n vreemdeling wat ... hy't ook 'n geweer.

JANA

Enele, ek sweer. As jy nie nou gaan nie jy moet my belowe ...

ENELE

Wat?

JANA

Jy moet my belowe jy sal nie sê nie. Jy móét. Dis sy broer.

ENELE

Ag sies, man. Dis siek.

JANA

Jy sal ons verwoes. Jy weet dit sal. As jy sê ... dit sal ons breek.

ENELE

Hulle het jou klaar gebreek.

JANA

Sweer jy? Belowe jy sal stilbly?

ENELE

Hoe de hel moet ek ...?!

Sy huil saggies.

Jana! Fine. Ek sal stilbly. Maar as hy as hy weer ...

JANA

Hy sal nie. Jy moet nou gaan.

ENELE

Ek kan nie gaan as jy so lyk nie ...

JANA

Loop! Loop uit my huis uit! Wat soek jy nog hier? Dit het niks met jou uit te waai nie!

ENELE

Dit het! Jy's my ...

JANA

Jou wat? Ek's jou baas se dogter! Fokkof!

Enele loop uit. Jana sak inmekaar.

5

Jana sit steeds op die bank met bietjie bloed wat by haar been afloop. Haar kortbroek is geskeur. Sy staar katatonies voor haar uit. Ligte/ klank van voëls kan aandui dat dit oggend is. Buite die sitkamer word 'n bakkie gehoor wat stilhou. Boet sluit die deur oop. Hy trek sy modderstewels uit en loop in sy wolkouse. Hy is effens dronk, maar glad nie in die toestand wat hy die vorige aande was nie, net bietjie onvas op sy voete. Hy praat met Jana soos hy instap en kyk nie lank genoeg vir haar om dadelik te sien in watter toestand sy is nie.

BOET

Môre, môre. Ek hoop nie jy lek nog jou wonde ná gisteraand nie. Ek het sommer in my bakkie aan die slaap geraak. Toe ry ek vanoggend ... Jana?

Hy kom tot waar sy op die bank sit.

BOET

Wat de hel het ...??? Het jy geval?

Hy sien dat dit bloed by op haar skootarea is en beseft sy is verkrag.

Wat het jy ... jy's...dis...

Jana knyp haar bene stywer teen mekaar.

BOET

My kind jy .. .jy ..

Hy probeer haar vashou, maar sy trek weg soos iemand wat pas deur 'n trauma is. Die "verwerping" laat Boet oorgaan van skok na ontembare woede. Boet loop heen en weer soos iemand wat mal word.

BOET

Nee. Nee. Nee. Nee. Nee. Nee. Nee. NEE!!!!

Hys skree en ruk aan die veiligheidshek soos iemand agter tralies. Hy stop abrupt soos iemand wat opeens iets besef.

BOET

Die hek. Gisteraand. Toe ek gisteraand hier uit is ek het nie ... die hek was oop ... ek het jou ...

Jana is stil. Sy begin geluidloos huil.

BOET

Die Fokkers! Ek gaan hulle fokken ... *(hy skree uit frustrasie/slaan dalk iets)* ... bleddie etters wat ons...

Hy sak skielik op sy arms neer op die bank agter Jana.

BOET

Daai donderse kaffers gaan nog ons mense een vir een uitroei.

Jana se oë is skielik groot as sy voor haar uitkyk. Sy besef haar pa verkeerde aanname, maar het 'n innerlike stryd oor of sy hom moet belas met die waarheid.

BOET

Kom. Ons gaan nou poliesstasie toe. Hierdie bleddie donders gaan nie hiermee wegkom nie.

Hy gee vir haar sy baadjie wat hy aanhet.

Dê. Trek aan. Dis koud buite.

Jana swyg steeds.

BOET

Kom. Ons moet gaan. Mens moet so gou moontlik gaan dat hulle ...

Hy kyk rond – soek sy sleutels.

Waar het ek nou my sleutel gelos? Dis goed jy't nie gestort nie. Mens moet gaan dat hulle nog die monsters kan neem om die fokker te vang. Ek gaan hom vermoor!

Hy soek nog rond.

JANA

(saggies, maar beslis) Nee.

Boet verstar.

BOET

(geskok) Wat bedoel jy, nee? Jy's seker nie ernstig nie. Gaan jy daai ... daai ... dier laat vry loop?

Jana is steeds stil.

Die fokker se DNA is op jou ... ons moet hom vastrek hy's seker in die ... *(nou weer kwaad)* As ons daai donder vang ...ek gaan hom verwurg met my ...

Jana skrik. Sy besef die implikasies.

JANA

Nee.

BOET

Hoekom de donder nie?

Jana huiwer.

,

Jammer! Ek ... my kind, ons moet geregtigheid laat geskied. Ek weet dis 'n nare spul, maar jy gaan moet ...

JANA

Nee.

BOET

Jy dink nie reguit nie! Ons moet hom uitwis! Hy moet ge— ...

JANA

Los dit, Pa. Dit het met 'n meisie in die koshuis gebeur. Ek het gesien hoe dit gaan. Sy sê die storie in die hof was erger as ... erger as ...

Sy dwing haarself om haar woorde uit te kry.

JANA

Sy sê dit was erger as dit wat gebeur het. Die polisie het die ... die ... man ... vrygespreek. Ek gaan nie weer hieroor ...

BOET

Ons moet dan ten minste dokter toe gaan. Jy kan Vigs kry of ... ag, Jirre ...

Hy wil-wil begin huil, maar stop homself.

BOET

Jy kan swanger wees. Ons moet dit ... ons moet dokter toe gaan. Ons kan Bloemfontein toe ry dan hoef niemand te weet nie.

Jana knik in ooreenstemming.

BOET

My kind, dink jy nie ons moet hierdie ding gaan aangee nie- dis 'n blerrie ... fok ...h y hoort vermoor te word!

Jana kyk haar pa vir die eerste keer in die oë, vasberade.

JANA

(ferm) Nee!

6

Johan sluit die veiligheidshek oop en kom binne. Die huis is leeg. Dis oggend.

JOHAN

Hallo?? Haloooo??

Boet kom in van die kamer-/kombuisingang.

BOET

Yes. Koffie?

JOHAN

Slaan my dood, broer. Maar jy's vroeg uit die vere! Ek raak nog gewoon aan die nuwe broertjie van my wat deesdae so hoog en droog leef. Die manne op die dorp sê hulle het jou drie weke laas in die kroeg gesien.

BOET

(geïrriteerd)

Soek jy koffie of nie?

JOHAN

Nee, los maar. Jou koffie smaak na blik. Enele kom kry my nou met die bakkie – ek het gestap van die silo's af.

BOET

Jaja.

JOHAN

Ek het eintlik vir daai dogter van jou kom soek. Ek wou haar gaan wys het hoe die skeerders vorder. Die wol lyk mooi vanjaar. Ek het haar nie met 'n oog gesien die laaste ruk nie. Weet nie of sy skielik te goed geword het vir haar oom nie.

BOET

Sy's siek vandag. Ek het jou dan gisteragternamiddag laat weet oor die radio sy kan nie môre uitkom nie.

JOHAN

Nou wat's fout? Maag of bors?

BOET

Seker griep. Lyfseer en so.

Johan lyk skoon afgehaal. Jana kom in. Sy het pajamas aan en lyk verslons. Wanneer sy vir Johan sien verstar sy. Hy staan op wanneer hy haar sien.

JANA

Môre.

JOHAN

Môre, môre. Goed om jou bietjie te sien. Jy hou jou skaars deesdae.

BOET

Los die kind. Sy's siek.

Daar's koffie op die stoof.

JANA

Dankie, Pa.

'n Bakkie hou buite stil. Dis Enele

JOHAN

Daar's my lift. Ek sê nounet vir jou pa Enele kom laai my gou op. Nie te slegte outjie nie. Jy was reg, Jaans.

Hy sit sy pet op om uit te gaan.

JANA

Tot siens.

Hy loop na haar om haar te soengroet/druk. Sy ruk dadelik weg.

JANA

Nee!

Sy besef hoe hard sy geskree het/skerp gereageer het.

Ek bedoel ek wil nie hê Oom moet siek raak nie. Wil nie aansteek nie ...

JOHAN

Ja, ja. Moenie laat die kieme jou onder kry nie, ou Jaans.

JANA

Ek sal nie.

Enele staan op die drumpel.

ENELE

Môre.

Hy haal sy pet af. Hy gee vir Johan die sleutels van die bakkie. Johan loop uit.

BOET

(kil) Ek dog jy gaan saam met Johan.

ENELE

Ek het net die bakkie gebring, Oom.

BOET

Jy kan darem klop voor jy inkom.

ENELE

Jammer, Oom, ek ...

JANA

Pa, wat gaan aan? Dis Enele?

BOET

En? Hy kan darem beskaafd wees in my huis.

Hy gluur hom aan. Enele gluur terug. Boet draai om en stap kamer toe

JANA

Ek's so jammer! Blerrie onbeskof. Ek weet nie wat fout is met hom nie.

Enele kyk haar beskuldigend aan.

ENELE

Kan ons weer oor die gedigte gaan?

JANA

Ek's regtig moeg, ek ...

ENELE

Ek skryf môre. Asseblief!

JANA

Goed.

7

Johan kom in die deur en roep

JOHAN

Hallo?? Boet? Jana?

Boet kom in uit die kombuis se rigting.

BOET

Yes.

JOHAN

Jy antwoord ook nie jou selfoon nie, nè.

BOET

Dis pap.

Johan gaan sit.

Gaan jy koffie drink?

JOHAN

Nee, ek wil sommer net hoor of jy die draadspanners wat Saterdag kom kan gaan wys waar die nuwe grenslyne is.

BOET

Ek's weg die naweek. Natal toe.

Johan is baie verbaas.

JOHAN

Heng, Boet! Natal? Laas wat jy so ver van die plaas was, is toe ons Grens toe is.

BOET

Goddank dis verby.

JOHAN

Dit was die beste jare van ons lewens.

Boet gluur hom aan.

BOET

Van jou lewe dalk. Dit was hel. Die dinge wat ons daar gesien het ... wat hulle ... wat ons gedoen het ...

JOHAN

Ag boet, ons was jonk, man. Ons het nie geweet wat ons doen nie.

BOET

Jy praat kak. Mens weet wat jy doen. Mens weet van reg en verkeerd.

JOHAN

Hoe moes ons geweet het die terrs sou later die helde wees en ons was die vyand? Ons was net gehoorsaam. Dis nie ons skuld nie.

BOET

Ek praat nie van politiek nie. Ek praat van tussenin. Ek praat van toe ons tussen hulle gebly het. Die mense. Ons het ...

JOHAN

Dit was kaffers. Hulle .. man ... hulle teel so gou aan ... jy skiet een en môre is daar vyf nuwes.

Boet is stil. Johan wil die onderwerp verander.

Wat gaan staan maak jy in Natal, ou boet? Het jy 'n bird in Durban vir jou gekry.

BOET

Jy's simpel, man. Ek gaan Greyton toe.

JOHAN

Vir wat?

BOET

Ek gaan saam met Retief Meyer en 'n paar manne van die kerk. Ons gaan na daai Mighty Men-kongresding toe.

Johan bars uit van die lag.

JOHAN

Maar my blierie hel, boet!! Slaan my dood met 'n stukkie brood en 'n ryk ou Jood! Jy's wraggies nou 'n kerkmens, hê?

BOET

Ek gaan maar saam. Hy nooi my al drie jaar lank. Nou gaan ek saam sodat ek vir hom kan sê dis tos en hy moet my laat staan.

JOHAN

Hel, dis nes op skool! Jy was mos CSV-hoof. Met die Bybel oor die kop geslaan. Almal was tog so verbaas toe ou dooms terugkom van Suidwes en sy Bybel vir 'n half-jack inruil.

Boet lag verleë saam. Probeer sy seer wegsteek.

JOHAN

Jy moet nou nie te ernstig raak nie. Solank die boek jou uit die kroeg hou is ek bly.

BOET

Mmmm ...

Jana kom in.

JANA

Hallo, Oom.

JOHAN

Yes, Jaans, ek hoor die man gaan bietjie weg. Ek sal die naweek kom inloer of als regloop as jou pa weg is ...

JANA

(reageer blitsig) Ek's nie hier nie. Ek gaan na tannie Bessie toe op die dorp.

JOHAN

Gmf! Dis nou interessant.

BOET

Dis veiliger. Mens wil nie 'n vrou alleen op die plaas laat ...

JOHAN

Nee, jy's reg. Mens weet nooit wat kan gebeur as mens alleen is nie ... bye, Jana. Boet.

Hy lig sy pet en loop uit. Boet groet deur sy hand te lig.

BOET

Ek het vir jou vleis uitgehaal wat jy kan saamvat as jy gaan by Bessie die naweek gaan bly. Die blou koelboks is nog in die buitekamer. Jy kan dit daarin sit. Dit witte seël nie meer so dig nie.

JANA

Ek en mamma het nog daai witte gekoop. Ons het Bloemfontein toe gery. Ek dink ons moes die bakkie invat vir 'n diens of iets.

BOET

Hy bly nie meer koud nie. Die goed laat hitte in as hulle oud raak.

JANA

As ons stad toe gegaan het, het ek altyd van daai yogurt sweets gekry in Woolworths. Hulle maak dit nie meer nie. Toe was sy nog gelukkig. Ek het 'n nuwe trekker gekry daai dag.

BOET

Jana ... *(hy huiwer voor hy voort gaan)* ... jy kan seker nie onthou nie maar ...

JANA

Ek onthou.

BOET

Sy was siek haar kop ... sy kon nie ... ek's net bang. Ná wat gebeur het met ... wat gebeur het met jou ... ek wil nie hê jy moet jou ma se ... ek wil nie hê jy moet deur dit gaan wat sy ...

JANA

Sy't ons gelos.

BOET

Sy't my gelos.

Stilte.

BOET

Ek wil jou nie die naweek alleen los nie. Ek gaan nou vir Retief ...

JANA

Nee.

BOET

My kind, jy kan skaars jouself aantrek. Hoe wil jy hê ...?

JANA

Ek dink jy moet gaan, Pa. Jy was nog nooit verder as Bloemfontein gewees nie.

Stilte.

Behalwe op die Grens.

BOET

Maar ek wil jou nie hier los nie. Jy kort iemand ...

JANA

Ant Bessie is daar. Ons gaan seker net lees en oor haar katte praat.

BOET

Ná wat gebeur ... ek wil jou nie alleen ...

JANA

Ek kom al lank reg op my eie, Pa.

BOET

Ek weet.

Hy kyk af. Voel berou.

JANA

Dis oukei, Pa.

Enele klop aan die deur.

ENELE

Môre, Oom. Jana.

BOET

Ek moet gaan pak.

Boet loop uit. Hy ignoreer Enele.

JANA

Ek's jammer. Ek weet nie wat fout is met hom nie.

ENELE

Jy weet goed.

JANA

Wat?

ENELE

Ek is 'n swarte wat sy dogter verkrag het.

JANA

Hy weet dis nie jy nie!

ENELE

Maar ons is maar almal dieselfde.

JANA

My pa was nooit so nie. Hy gee om vir jou.

ENELE

Hy hét omgee. Jy en jou oom. Julle gebruik my.

JANA

Wat?

ENELE

Ek weet hoekom julle skielik aandeel wil uitdeel. Ná al die jarre.

JANA

Asseblief! Kan ons 'n ander tyd hieroor ...

ENELE

Nee. Dis tyd. Jy verwag ek moet deel wees van hierdie plaas? Ek moet elke dag langs jou oom in 'n bakkie sit. My pa sit agterop. Ek moet kyk vir sy vet vingers op die stuur. Dieselfde hande wat wat my suster Want jy is my suster – al dink jy jy's die baas se dogter. En jy weier om te praat. En ek moet ook stilbly. Besef jy jou pa het my nog nie in die oë gekyk van daai dag af nie? Hy maak of ek nie bestaan nie.

JANA

Hy sal oor dit kom. Hy's net in skok.

ENELE

Jou pa was altyd goed vir my.

JANA

Ek weet.

ENELE

Hy't al my skoolgeld betaal.

JANA

Ek dog jy't 'n beurs gehad?

ENELE

Ek het eers ná skool uitgevind dit was hy. Hy't vir die skool gevra om vir niemand te sê nie. Hy was by al my rugby games. Bloemfontein toe gery. Sakgeld en klere en kos gegee. Ook vir die toer oorsee. Hy't vir daai skool betaal en niks teruggevra nie.

JANA

En nou gaan ons vir jou universiteit betaal.

ENELE

(bitter) Jy en jou oom?

Hy gooi 'n bladsy neer.

JANA

Wat's dit? *(sy lees)* Jou uitslae! Hoe kon ek vergeet – dis vandag – die tweedegeleentheid-uitslae.
(haar oë rek)

Wat? Jy't 'n A vir Engels! Dis briljant!

ENELE

Hulle gaan vir my 'n beurs gee.

JANA

Wie?

ENELE

Die regering. Nie julle nie.

Stilte.

JANA

So jy gaan nie meer landbou swot nie.

ENELE

Ek het kom groet.

JANA

Asseblief, moenie gaan nie! Ons het jou nodig!

ENELE

Ek weet.

8

Jana sit en lees 'n boek wanneer sy die bakkie hoor stilhou buite die huis. Sy is eers bang, maar ontspan wanneer sy sien dis haar pa.

JANA

Pa?

BOET

Yes, Jaans!

Jana sluit die veiligheidshek oop. Boet kom in met 'n naweektas en 'n mandjie. Hy haal sy pet af as hy inkom. Hy probeer haar druk/soengroet, maar sy deins terug.

JANA

Jammer, ek ...

BOET

Nee, nee, ek verstaan heeltemal ...

Stilte.

Hulle staan ongemaklik rond. Boet onthou skeilik van die mandjie in sy hand.

Ek het vir jou iets gebring.

Hy gee vir haar die mandjie.

Die swartes daar, die Zoeloes ... hulle vleg mos so die mandjies. Van die suikerriet en so.

JANA

Dankie, Pa. Hoe was dit?

BOET

Goed! Ek moet jou vertel ...

Hy raak bewoë. Dit vang Jana omkant.

Jammer ... wag ... sit.

Hy haal sy sakdoek uit.

Ek huil al heel naweek soos 'n donderse meisiekind... Ag, donder ...

Hulle gaan sit. Jana is effe verbaas. Sy ken nie hierdie kant van haar pa nie.

JANA

Pa? Is als ... wat het gebeur?

BOET

Ek weet nie! Dit was 'n moerse klomp mense. Mans. Die meeste van hulle boere en hulle volk. 'n Paar ouens uit die dorpe. Dit was ... soos 'n kerkdiens ... maar anders ... ek weet nie ... ag, Vader, ... ek weet mos nie altyd hoe om hierdie goed te ... (*speel met sy pet, druk dit dalk tussen sy vuiste, sluk sy trane*) Ek het besef. Daar's goed wat my ... wat ons vashou. Ag hel, ek val so weg met die diep stories ... wil jy nie eers koffie ...

JANA

Nee, ek wil hoor! Wat is dit, Pa? Wat gaan aan?

BOET

Man, ek het besef die naweek ... daar's dinge ... goed uit ons verlede waaraan ek ... ons klou wat ons daar hou. Goed wat ek moet sê want dis in die donker. Ek het goed erken in 'n groep daar ... goed wat ek jarre laas ... wat ek so hard probeer dryf het uit my kop ... ek moet jou vertel.

JANA

Pa hoef nie. Ek verstaan ...

BOET

Nee. Ek moet. Ek gaan nie dat jy dra aan iets wat nie joune is om te dra nie. Ek wil in die lig loop. Ek het te lank hierdie geraamtes ... (*raak bewoë, maar kry sy emosies onder beheer*) Ek was altyd 'n Godvresende ou. Van kleintyd af. Hy't vir my gesorg. As ek gebid het vir reën, het dit gekom. As ek hom gevra het om raad, het Hy iets of iemand gestuur. Ek het jou ma ontmoet. Sy was my ... ek het haar liefgehad. Ons kon werk, ek en sy. Kinders grootmaak wat kerk toe gaan en ...

Jana is ongemaklik.

BOET

Skuus, ek weet dis vreemd. Ons praat nie oor godsdiens of ... elk geval ... ek ... ek's mos ná skool opgeroep. Ek en jou oom. Hy's mos vroeg uit die skool. Disleksie en so. Daai tyd het jy maar army toe gegaan as jy klaar was met skool en jy was nie seker oor wat jy wou swot nie. Die dominee ... die kerk het gesê ons doen dit vir die Here. Dat ons Sy mense beskerm. Ons land beskerm. En ek het dit geglo. Ek het soggens gebid en gevra dat die Here my sal gebruik. Gebruik ... gebruik om die terrs uit te roei en het nie ... ek het nie besef ... (*raak bewoë, maar kry weer sy emosies onder beheer*)rToe ons ná basics grens toe is ...ek én jou oom ... oor ons van die plaas af is en gewoon is aan skiet ... hulle het ons gekies. Ons was skerpskutters. Hulle het vir ons targets gegee en dan moes ons ... Johan ... dit was altyd makliker vir hom. Hy't nooit ... die een dag moes ons weer 'n spul ... ons was agter op 'n bakkie, dit was 'n gewone siwwie bakkie, anders sou hulle ons dadelik opgemerk het. Ek en Johan was op pad na waar die ruitverwysing was. En toe ... daar het skielik 'n spul mense na ons aangehardloop gekom. Van agter af. Die son het in my oë geskyn. Johan het bestuur en het gesê ek moet skiet! Hy't gesê dis die terrs. Ons is naby aan waar die intelligensie gesê het hul sou wees. Dit het gelyk of hul granate in hul hande het. Ek was so donders bang. Als het vinnig gebeur. Hy't gesê dis terrs: ek moet skiet ... hy't geskree ... “fok hulle op! ... fok hulle op!”. En toe skiet ek. Ek het geskiet tot die groep ophou hardloop het. Tot die hele spul platgelê het. Ek het vir Johan gesê ons moet gaan kyk. Ons het omgedraai om te gaan kyk. Die lyke ... die lyke ... dit was kinders ... hulle was kinders ... jong kinders. Vyftien, sestien jaar oud. Dalk nog jonger. Johan het aan hul geskop om te kyk ... “fokken terrs” het hy gesê. Ek het afgebuk om te kyk wat in hul hande was. Dit was avokados. Avokadopere. Ek het sewe kinders geskiet oor hul

avokadopere aan ons wou verkoop het. Johan het aanhou skop en lag asof ons pas die Curriecup gewen het. Ek kon nie verstaan hoe hy ... hy't gelag. Ek het hom ... (raak van voor af kwaad) Ek het hom aan die kraag gegryp en daar in die rooi Suidwes stof gemoer soos ek nog nooit vantevore ... ek het geskree. Oor en oor: "Dis die verkeerdes! Jy't ons die verkeerdes laat skiet! Dis die verkeerdes!!" Ek het hom gebliksem. Ek het hom gebliksem tot ek gedog het hy nie gaan opstaan nie.

Stilte.

Maar hy't opgestaan. Hy't opgestaan en gesê ... hy't gesê ... ek sal dit nooit vergeet nie: "Donderse kafferboetie. Nooit gedink jy sal toelaat dat kaffers tussen ons kom nie".

JANA

Pa, ek ...

BOET

Dit was net die begin. Hy't daar bevriend geraak met 'n klomp ... met 'n klomp werfsetters. Regte gemors. In die army is daar allsorts. Regte armblanke karavaanpark-tipes. Ek het gemaak of ek hom nie ken nie. Deur die dag ... die ouens was verveeld. Verveeld, warm, gesuip en gewapen. Die army het die drank voorsien. Ons basis was naby 'n Ovambo-stam se hutte. Saans ... saans het ek die vroue hoor gil. Ek het gehoor hoe die Ovambo-mans hulle probeer beskerm ... ouer mans. Regtig ou manne. So oud soos my pa was. So oud soos ek nou is. Wat magteloos moes toekyk hoe hul vroue en dogters deur wit seuns ... (skud sy kop) Ek het hom gekonfronteer daaroor. Johan. Hy't net gelag en my aangekyk of ek van my sinne beroof is. Wie's ek om vir hom te sê wat hy mag en nie mag doen aan 'n swarte nie? Maar ek ... ek het net toegekyk. Ek het net toegekyk en toegelaat dat dit aand ná aand gebeur. Ek weet nie of ek bang was dat hy sou vertel wat gebeur het daai middag met die advokadopere nie. Ek was 'n lafhaard. Ek het geweet dis verkeerd. Toe ons terugkom van die Grens ... ek was 'n spook ... seker bietjie bossies. Ek het my binneste daar begrawe ... daar in daai rooi grond. Daar was niks van my oor om vir jou ma te gee nie. Wat nog te praat van jou? Enigste mens wat verstaan het ... wat geweet het ... was Johan ... vir wat dit werd was. Ek het geswyg om die seer te probeer toemaak.

Stilte.

Want dis seer. Ek het oppad hientoe agter in Retief se bakkie gesit en dink hieroor. En dis ... dis seer om seer te maak. Almal praat oor die's wat seer gekry het. Maar ons ouens wat die seer gemaak het ... dis seer. En ek sê nie dit maak wat ek gedoen het reg nie. Glad nie. Ek was 'n lafhaard. Maar ... ja...

JANA

Sjoe, Pa, ek ...

BOET

Ek's jammer, my kind. Ek het mooi gedink wat ek vir jou wou sê en ek ... ek moes gepraat het. Dan was jou ma dalk nog by ons. Dalk sou ek nie so ... so baie in die kroeg gewees het nie. Ek moes hom vergewe. Johan. Ek moet vergewe. Ek moet hom vergewe. En seker myself ook. Gisteraand. Ná ek in die groep so gepraat het. Al my derms uitgeryg het en gebid het: Dit was die eerste aand wat ek nie daai vroue hoor gil het in my slaap nie. Dat my eie broer so iets ...

Stilte.

JANA

Pappa. Dit was hy.

BOET

Hoe bedoel jy?

JANA

Dit was oom Johan.

LIGTE AF.